

HEGEL'S
HISTORY OF
PHILOSOPHY
NEW INTERPRETATIONS



EDITED BY
DAVID A. DUQUETTE

Hegel's History of Philosophy

SUNY series in Hegelian Studies

William Desmond, editor

Hegel's History of Philosophy

New Interpretations



Edited by
David A. Duquette

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Contents



<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i> <i>David A. Duquette</i>	1
<i>Part I. Method, Beginnings, and Perspective in Hegel's History of Philosophy</i>	
<i>Chapter 1. Hegel's Method for a History of Philosophy: The Berlin Introductions to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy (1819–1831)</i> <i>Angelica Nuzzo</i>	19
<i>Chapter 2. With What Must the History of Philosophy Begin? Hegel's Role in the Debate on the Place of India within the History of Philosophy</i> <i>Robert Bernasconi</i>	35
<i>Chapter 3. The Dawning of Desire: Hegel's Logical History of Philosophy and Politics</i> <i>Andrew Fiala</i>	51
<i>Part II. Accounts of the Philosophical Tradition in Hegel</i>	
<i>Chapter 4. Hegel on Socrates and Irony</i> <i>Robert R. Williams</i>	67
<i>Chapter 5. Ancient Skepticism and Systematic Philosophy</i> <i>Will Dudley</i>	87
<i>Chapter 6. The Historicity of Philosophy and the Role of Skepticism</i> <i>Tanja Staehler</i>	107

<i>Chapter 7. The Place of Rousseau in Hegel's System</i> <i>Allegra De Laurentiis</i>	121
<i>Chapter 8. Hegel Between Spinoza and Derrida</i> <i>Merold Westphal</i>	143
 <i>Part III. System, Progress, and Culmination in Hegel</i>	
<i>Chapter 9. Systematicity and Experience: Hegel and the Function of the History of Philosophy</i> <i>Kevin Thompson</i>	167
<i>Chapter 10. Is There Progress in the History of Philosophy?</i> <i>Vittorio Hösle</i>	185
<i>Chapter 11. The "End of History" Revisited: Kantian Reason, Hegelian Spirit, and the History of Philosophy</i> <i>Jere Paul O'Neill Surber</i>	205
 <i>Contributors</i>	 225
<i>Index</i>	229

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De Pere, Wisconsin

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Introduction



David A. Duquette

It seems fair to say that the discipline of the history of philosophy has been somewhat out of fashion. This is due likely not only to the influence of the “analytic turn” in Anglo-American philosophy or the postmodern movement in continental philosophy but also, at least recently, to the increasing pedagogical emphasis on “doing” rather than merely “studying” philosophy. There appears to be a presumption that in merely studying the history of philosophy a student will become basically a passive observer or witness to the thoughts of the great philosophers but will not him or herself be an engaged participant in philosophical thinking. Socrates often enough is held up as a model of the actively engaged philosopher and the Socratic method is touted in many academic disciplines, in addition to philosophy proper. One can wonder whether the fashionable appropriation of the thinker Socrates is aimed at enhancing an appreciation for the pursuit of truth or whether it is actually motivated by a desire of sophistical wisdom, such as a desire for strategies of persuasion that fulfill goals of popular culture, e.g., becoming a successful marketer, leader, innovator, etc. We are witness to a crass “instrumentalization” of knowledge that turns the value of philosophy into a means of empowering individuals, in the sense that philosophy might be advertised as ideal preparation for the pursuit of a law degree or some other profession that requires a command of logic and argument, or as a personal tool for developing the capacity to see through the sophistry of others so that one is less likely to be hoodwinked by scam artists, phony gurus, or others (including our politicians?) who prey on human naiveté and ignorance. Per-

humanity, of World Spirit, historically constitute progressive development, specifically, in society, politics, culture, art, religion, and philosophy. He also believed that his own historical period provided a significant culmination in this development and that his philosophy gave expression to it, giving a sort of closure to the process by narratively bringing it all to an end (completion) without bringing it all to a halt (termination). What kind of development would occur in the future was not something that philosophy could discover for Hegel, but he was confident that, whatever form it took, it would be based upon the milestone achievements that had already come to pass.

Perhaps it will be helpful to sketch out an overview of Hegel's philosophical system in order to locate the place and significance of the history of philosophy. We find the structure of the overall system in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*,² which effectively comprises Hegel's lifework in philosophy, at least from the publication of his first major work, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807),³ which Hegel considered as the "first part" of philosophy, in the sense of an introduction or entryway. The first edition of the *Encyclopedia* appeared in 1817, was later enlarged in 1827, and again augmented in 1830, the year prior to his death. As a comprehensive systematic work, or as Hegel liked to put it a "scientific system of truth," it comprises the essential dimensions of philosophical thought, as reflected in its basic threefold division: (1) Science of Logic, (2) Philosophy of Nature, and (3) Philosophy of Spirit. Anyone familiar with this system knows that there is a tripartite "rhythm" that runs throughout, so that the Science of Logic is divided into the Doctrines of Being, Essence, and the Concept; the Philosophy of Nature into Mechanics, Physics, and Organic Nature; and the Philosophy of Spirit into Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit, and Absolute Spirit. Each of these divisions of the Philosophy of Spirit is also subdivided: Subjective Spirit into Anthropology, Phenomenology, and Psychology; Objective Spirit into Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life; and Absolute Spirit into Art, Religion, and Philosophy.

The Philosophy of Spirit is about humanity in all of its multifarious forms of life activity (although I should not beg the question as to whether Spirit is reducible to humanity per se, so let us say that it is perhaps about humanity as incarnational of Spirit). There is a definite progression to greater levels of complexity as we move within Subjective Spirit from considering the human soul as an entity of the natural world, to human consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason, and next in Objective Spirit to various levels of social and political interaction, leading to the thematization of the historicity of the development of human institutions in the world as embodiments of self-conscious freedom, all within the domain of what Hegel called "*Realphilosophie*." However, when we arrive at the capstone of Hegel's system, the level of Absolute Spirit, something quite remarkable happens. Heretofore, at least in the realms

haps there is an expectation that a command of philosophy can enable individuals to become more efficient at manipulating the legal system to their benefit, which becomes more important in our increasingly litigious society. It is ironic, but not really surprising, that recent educational trends toward “practical philosophy” should remind anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with the history of ancient Greek thought of the very *raison d’être* of those itinerant teachers of wisdom and virtue from whom Socrates was at pains to disassociate himself. Moreover, the current preoccupation with what is called “critical thinking” and “applied philosophy” in undergraduate courses seems to promote an almost exclusive concern with the present, as if our challenges and problems are of an age so advanced from past epochs that we likely have little to learn from them that will be of value. Might it not be the case, however, in light of critical global developments of recent years, that the prevailing wisdom about the value of history is quite deficient and that the lack of attention to our cultural, social, political, and philosophical past has resulted in a diminished ability to act thoughtfully?

I offer these initial comments not only because the question “Why study the history of philosophy?”—indeed, why study Hegel’s history of philosophy?—is clearly relevant for us, but also because it was a concern for Hegel. Hegel was not only a great philosophical thinker but a committed teacher who had a firm idea of what it was to do and to teach philosophy properly and of the value of philosophy, not just to philosophers but to society and culture as a whole—philosophy was the most important element of liberal education. The *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,¹ as well as those on art and on religion, were delivered not to academic philosophers but to students. Hegel lectured on the history of philosophy for a total of nine courses, and while in Berlin he gave these lectures regularly, every other year, until his death in 1831. There is little doubt that he personally hoped as a teacher of philosophy to have an influence upon his young middle class students, many of whom would aspire to various professions, including the civil service. It is also likely that he was not very much interested in imparting to these students the skills of critical thinking, at least in our now popular sense, but rather more interested in nurturing intelligence as vision and a sense of purpose. Accordingly, for Hegel, the study of the history of philosophy was not an antiquarian pursuit but rather an investigation into the very nature of philosophical intelligence and its development through time. Insofar as all philosophy is in quest of truth and intelligibility, the history of philosophy is an account of the successive attempts historically to articulate this, to attain a conceptualization of what Hegel calls the “absolute.” These attempts form no simple sequence but rather constitute lines of development which, while not perfectly smooth, do exhibit progress and suggest a logical pattern. Hegel was convinced that, overall, the activities of

of nature and spirit, philosophical thought has focused on the fundamentally temporal dimensions of human existence, activity, and thought. Indeed, in these areas philosophical consciousness has become increasingly historical and sensitive to the time-boundedness of Spirit, while also appealing to the basic categories of pure thinking articulated in the Logic, categories of the Idea, in order to provide intelligibility to human experience and institutional life. The move to Absolute Spirit does not abandon the historicity of self-consciousness, as is clear in Hegel's historical treatments of art, religion, and philosophy. Nonetheless, there is a shift in thematic focus from what is occurring in time to the timeless, from the finite to the infinite, from the relative to the absolute. This shift might be thought analogous to Augustine's distinction between knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), where in the first case reason deals completely with worldly matters, whereas in the second, reason elevates itself to pure contemplation of eternal truths, and of God Himself. There is no doubt that Hegel thought art, religion, and philosophy involved a more direct consideration or contemplation of the Absolute (although he would have disputed Augustine's distinction insofar as it presupposes a fundamental separation of God and humanity; moreover, Hegel's *Vernunft* or "higher reason" is operative at every level of his philosophical system). As we move from the external sensuous expressions of the Absolute in art, to the more internalized "picture thinking" of mystical intuition in religion, and finally to the conceptualizations of philosophy, we get increasingly more adequate consciousness of the Absolute (of Truth, God, Ultimate Reality . . .), which is also to say that Spirit thereby attains optimal self-consciousness and self-knowledge (Spirit is its own object in a kind of purified manner, parallel to thought having itself as its own object in the Logic, but with all of the particularities of nature and of spirit having been developed and thus presumed).

This contemplation of the Absolute in philosophy occurs not only in Hegel's philosophical system as a whole, in *his* philosophy, but also in the study of the history of philosophy, Hegel would argue. The section of the *Encyclopedia* entitled "Philosophy" originally (in the first 1817 edition) comprised a mere six paragraphs that focused on the syllogistic relationships among Logic, Nature, and Spirit. There is some uncertainty as to the relation between history of philosophy and this final section of the *Encyclopedia* since, as Frederick Beiser has noted in his introduction to the Bison Book Edition of the English translation of the *Lectures* by E. S. Haldane (1995), "Hegel never gave the history of philosophy a firm and unambiguous place in his system. The main exposition of his system, the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* of 1830, ends with philosophy as the highest manifestation of reason, the final self-awareness of reason; but it accords no specific place to the history of philosophy as such" (xxii). Moreover, the *Lectures*, while de-

fining the nature and purpose of philosophy, do not position the history of philosophy anywhere in the overall system, and while Hegel does seem to consider the history of philosophy a part of the philosophy of history, its exact position is left indeterminate. Beiser concludes, "it seems that we must give the history a negligible, or at best a minor, role in his system. At least we cannot assign it any numbered paragraph, any neat and tidy corner" (Ibid.).

While it is correct that we cannot assign definitively a place to the history of philosophy, there are some other things to consider when thinking about the place or role of Hegel's history of philosophy within the overall system. First, Hegel considered the *Encyclopedia* to be an outline (*im Grundrisse*) of his philosophical system. In the introduction to the third edition, he says "As *Encyclopedia* science is not presented in the detailed development of its specification, but limited to the origins and the basic concepts of the particular sciences" (quoted in Behler, xxiv). Ernst Behler comments that the *Encyclopedia* was Hegel's basic philosophy text and he used it in his lecture courses on his system of philosophy, as well as on various parts of the system. In these lectures, Hegel provided "vivid enactment" of the *Encyclopedia*: "To see a lively element in these texts, one should consider that Hegel reworked them until the end of his life and constantly gave them new shape. In this structure, his *Encyclopedia* has become the basis and synopsis of the extraordinarily influential lectures of Hegel" (xxv). Even in the first 1817 edition of the text, Hegel is clear in the Preface that "the nature of an outline not only precludes a more exhaustive treatment of the content of ideas. It also limits the discussion of the systematic derivation of the evidence which such an encyclopedia must contain, and which is indispensable for a scientific philosophy. The title [*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*] should suggest partly the scope of the whole, and partly the intent to leave the details for oral delivery" (46).

Second, if we follow Beiser's recommendation that we give the history of philosophy a "negligible, or at best minor" role in Hegel's system, then we should do the same for the lectures on the philosophy of art and the lectures on the philosophy of religion, each of which are cast in a historical/developmental context not indicated in the section on Absolute Spirit in the *Encyclopedia*. However, according to the late Quentin Lauer, the philosophy of Absolute Spirit, the final stage in the Philosophy of Spirit, "constitutes the quantitatively major portion of the legacy Hegel has bequeathed to posterity (although, paradoxically enough, very little of it was published by Hegel himself—the courses he gave were transcribed by students and ultimately published posthumously) . . . the whole corpus of Hegel's writings . . . fit not only neatly but also convincingly into this systematically articulated structure."⁴ Moreover, even if we note that the philosophy of art and religion can

be placed more easily into the system because of the treatment of art and religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, there is a strong implication even in this work that there must be a philosophy of philosophy to complete the account of the final achievement of Absolute Knowing in Absolute Spirit. Hegel's course lectures on the history of philosophy explicitly perform this task. "It is precisely in and through its history that we see what philosophy is. On this interpretation, then, the history of philosophy would be the philosophy of philosophy, the coping stone of the philosophy of absolute spirit and of the whole Hegelian system" (9).

With these preliminaries, let me introduce the essays in this volume, which take up a variety of important issues including the relation of Hegel's history of philosophy to his system of philosophy as a whole.

Part I. Method, Beginnings, and Perspective in Hegel's History of Philosophy

It is appropriate that an investigation of Hegel's history of philosophy begins with a discussion of method, for with any philosopher—and with Hegel in particular—method is the key that opens the door to the philosophical system. Of course, Hegel's philosophy is his entire system and, while what is called his "dialectical method" runs throughout, this is no mechanical procedure that operates in some homogeneous fashion. Indeed, Hegel eschews purely formal methods that abstract excessively from the content of a subject matter. The method must preserve the relation between form and content and this means that, accordingly, it must be determined according to the specific nature of the matter at hand. For instance, the two disciplines of history of philosophy and the philosophy of history might at first seem to require very similar, if not identical, methods. However, this initial supposition is likely to be misguided in that the content of the history of philosophy, which comprises all of the noteworthy philosophies and philosophers of the past, is quite different from the content of the philosophy of history which, to a great extent, is an account of the actions of world historical figures, particularly as they influence the development of culture, society, and politics. On the other hand, what both of these disciplines have in common is an integral connection to Hegel's Logic, which comes first in Hegel's overall system and which obviously must play a significant role for method.

Angelica Nuzzo's essay, "Hegel's Method for a History of Philosophy: The Berlin Introductions to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy (1819–1831)," analyzes Hegel's notion of a "history of philosophy" in the several Introductions to his lectures held between 1819 and 1831. In particular, she provides a systematic and methodological reconstruction of the argument

concerning placement of the discipline of history of philosophy within the system of philosophy. The two “principles” she proposes to explicate Hegel’s methodology of a history of philosophy are the “principle of parallelism” that ties history of philosophy to speculative Logic (the claim is that the succession of the systems in the history of philosophy “corresponds” to the succession of the categories in the development of the Logic) and the “principle of synchronicity,” which allows Hegel to tie the history of philosophy to the histories of the other figures of absolute spirit. Her basic thesis is that Hegel’s method for a history of philosophy amounts to a combination of the principles of parallelism and of synchronicity.

Nuzzo’s essay does much to clarify the relation between the logical structure of the entire system of philosophy and the historical development of the rationality that the system embodies. In so doing, she helps us to understand both the scientific character of Hegel’s presentation of the history of philosophy and its systematic necessity within Hegel’s philosophy overall, thus alleviating the paradoxes associated with philosophy’s having a history.

In addition to the matter of beginning with method, and how a consideration of method helps us to begin to tackle Hegel’s history of philosophy, there is also the issue of where Hegel begins his historical account of the philosophical tradition, in particular its cultural origins. In his essay “With What Must the History of Philosophy Begin? Hegel’s Role in the Debate on the Place of India Within the History of Philosophy,” Robert Bernasconi takes up the question of the place Hegel assigned to Indian thought. Locating his discussion in the context of the so-called Oriental Renaissance in early nineteenth century Germany, and taking advantage of the new edition of Hegel’s lectures on the history of philosophy and using it in conjunction with Hegel’s review of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the author reconstructs the trajectory of Hegel’s thought on this subject. The result is that we can no longer say that Hegel simply dismissed Indian thought from philosophy. There is perhaps a confusion between such a dismissal and Hegel’s rejection of Friedrich Schlegel’s account of Indian philosophy as the source of Western philosophy. Moreover, there is the possibility that Hegel expressly considered—and rejected—beginning his lectures on the history of philosophy with India and not with Greece. This suggests that, in this case at least, Hegel’s philosophical chauvinism is more complicated than is usually portrayed.

Nonetheless, Hegel’s Eurocentrism is undeniable and raises serious questions about criteria for inclusion in a holistic account of the history of philosophy, presuming that there is some universal tradition of philosophy, and that there can or must be unity in its narrative account. Both Hegel and Schlegel made this presumption, but Hegel restricted it to the Western

tradition on the basis of coherence rather than inclusiveness. India could be the point of departure (as “preliminary” or “presupposition” of philosophy) for the Western world, and Western philosophy, but it could not be an intrinsic part of its development, since philosophy can flourish only under conditions of freedom, not in naturalistic absorption. Perhaps it is the hazard of any historical presentism that development will be seen as necessarily leading to one’s own place in the present and that one must focus on intelligible lines of continuity within a tradition of a *we* (compare the debate about whether the concept of universal human rights is fundamentally Western in origin and meaning). Perhaps, also, the possibility of a more inclusive coherent account requires reaching a level of development not yet attained, but within reach.

Andrew Fiala, in “The Dawning of Desire: Hegel’s Logical History of Philosophy and Politics,” is interested in analyzing and critiquing the way Hegel handles his “chicken-or-egg” problem: the occurrence of philosophy presupposes the existence of political freedom, but the development presupposes the idea of free spirit brought about in philosophy. He emphasizes that for Hegel the history of philosophy is a retrospective undertaking from the vantage point of the present, in which we see the organic connections between the whole of spirit. Fiala explains this by discussing Hegel’s account of the logic of historical development, including the accounts of historical causality and organic development, and further indicates the limits of Hegel’s account by considering his use of the language of “desire” and his use of the metaphor of the “flash” that initiates the dawning of Western philosophy. Moreover, he argues that the problem of origins is primarily a problem for *us*, we Western philosophers and historians who identify our own search for origins with the Greeks, and concludes that if today *we* return to Hegel and to the Greeks with other questions that stem from our concern with Eurocentrism, patriarchy, etc., we should conceive of these concerns as a continuation of the attempt begun with Hegel’s history of philosophy: the attempt to locate the origin of our present philosophical and political concerns. Such critical contemporary concerns indicate a newly developed set of ideas that have their origin in the implicit desire for philosophical truth and universal political freedom found in both Hegel and in the Greeks.

In considering the problem of origins in Hegel’s conception of history, and in particular the role (or lack thereof) of Eastern cultures in his historiography, Fiala returns to the issue of Hegel’s Eurocentrism previously raised by Bernasconi. Both authors agree that Hegel recognized that the Greeks were indebted to the East but apparently not enough to allow it a genuine world historical role—the Orientals are consigned to pre-history. Both authors also recognize the complexity of Hegel’s Eurocentrism and chauvinism. Fiala’s essay helps to unravel that complexity by giving a philosophical ac-

count of it, suggesting the “necessity” of an origin understood as a “dawning of the light.” Whether such an account can deal fully with the issue of temporal and causal explanation is a larger topic.

Part II. *Accounts of the Philosophical Tradition in Hegel*

In turning to Hegel's views on the great philosophers of the past, it perhaps goes without saying that a discussion of Socrates, who is sometimes referred to as the father of philosophy (somewhat ironically given his midwifery skill), is particularly valuable. We tend to think of Socrates as defining the vocation of the “love of wisdom” and as providing archetypal expression of philosophical “desire” (with Fiala, the *Trieb* that Hegel attributes uniquely to the Greeks). However, the nature of Socratic wisdom appears paradoxical. When the oracle at Delphi proclaimed that Socrates was the wisest of men, Socrates was apparently astounded, since he did not think himself wise, and yet his piety would not allow him to contradict the gods. His interpretation of the oracle was that his wisdom must lie in his awareness of his ignorance, and that this constituted his superiority to others who claimed to possess wisdom in the sense of real knowledge of various matters. Nevertheless, there are still questions about how much or how little Socrates really knew and about how much he pretended to know or not to know. Socrates' ironic style (scripted, of course, by his famous student Plato) leads one to wonder how serious Socrates was about the pursuit of wisdom. Does Socratic irony communicate an authentic commitment to truth or is it a mere jest that is intended to deflate all claims to truth? Is Socrates the founder of philosophy or is he the first postmodernist?

These are the sorts of issues addressed in Robert Williams's essay “Hegel on Socrates and Irony.” According to Williams, the possibility of viewing Socrates as the “founder of unphilosophy” was raised by Friedrich Schlegel, who looked to Socrates in support of his own account of irony. Not surprisingly, Hegel opposed this appropriation of Socrates. For Hegel, Socrates is to be taken quite seriously in inaugurating philosophy and more specifically in introducing and advocating the principle of self-determining subjective freedom. As Williams indicates, to understand how Socratic irony is also serious we must address the prior question (in the spirit of Socratic method), what is irony? By distinguishing between destructive and constructive irony, and showing how the former is self-defeating and leads to an *Aufhebung* in the latter, it is possible to defend Hegel's criticisms of Schlegel, as well as to defend Hegel against Kierkegaard's later Schlegelian rejection of Hegel's portrait of Socrates.

Skepticism has been a major challenge to systematic philosophy historically and Hegel's discussion of it in his history of philosophy is important

for meeting that challenge. Hegel's refutation of skepticism, as a position that is not internally coherent and rests upon dogmatism, is fairly well known but his analysis of the varieties of skepticism and his preferences for some versions over others, along with the extent to which skepticism can be incorporated into his philosophical system, is less evident in the literature. Will Dudley in his essay "Ancient Skepticism and Systematic Philosophy" intends to provide clarification on these matters. According to Dudley, the standard interpretations of Hegel on skepticism are deficient, particularly on Hegel's account of the varieties of ancient skepticism, as well as on what Hegel finds valuable in any of them. Is Hegel's method influenced by skepticism or does he find value in it for other reasons? What is the fundamental difference between ancient and modern skepticism that makes the former preferable? In this essay, the author explains the standard view of Hegel's treatment of skepticism, reviews Hegel's analysis of the ancient skeptics to clarify his evaluation of them, and proposes a way of understanding the relationship of skepticism to Hegel's dialectical method and philosophical system.

Tanja Staehler's piece, "The Historicity of Philosophy and the Role of Skepticism," picks up the concluding motif of Dudley's essay, the relation of skepticism to Hegel's philosophic system, but also connects to it a theme found in our very first essay by Nuzzo, the historicity of philosophy. Staehler is interested in examining how Hegel came to the view in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that skepticism is not really the "invincible opponent of philosophy," but rather is actually a "moment" or stage within philosophy as a constructive endeavor. However, in order to accomplish this, the basic character of philosophy must be clarified, in particular as to how it begins and then proceeds in a temporal development. On the basis of these considerations, the author outlines Hegel's discussion of skepticism in several different texts. She identifies two important insights that Hegel arrived at regarding the relation of skepticism to philosophy: (1) ancient skepticism helps to provide a beginning for philosophy by overcoming the "convictions of natural consciousness," and (2) skepticism in its true form is an implicit moment within every philosophical system. Moreover, skepticism is not merely a negative moment in philosophy (incomplete skepticism) but rather functions to express the principle of "determinate negation" and fosters the elevation of consciousness to a new and higher shape, what Hegel calls in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* "thoroughgoing Skepticism." According to Hegel, implicit in Sextus Empiricus's account of Pyrrhonian Skepticism with its various "tropes" there is an important critique of the metaphysics of the understanding (*Verstand*). However, while "thoroughgoing skepticism" is scientific and provides a presuppositionless beginning for philosophy, it does not reach the stage of speculative thinking *per se*. Rather, speculative ideal-

ism embraces it and raises it up as the moment of determinate negation in both the conceptual and historical development of thought.

The question of the role that a particular philosophical tradition, school of thought, or philosopher plays in Hegel's own philosophical system is certainly not restricted to a consideration of Socratic wisdom or of skepticism. On the other hand, when considering Hegel's account of the philosophical tradition, it is not likely that every philosopher in the history of philosophy had an equal or even significant impact on Hegel's own thought. There are signal moments and figures that stand out, however, and Rousseau is one of them. In "The Place of Rousseau in Hegel's System," Allegra De Laurentiis assesses Hegel's overall interpretation of Rousseau in the light of his comments on "volonté" in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* §163, Addition 1, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where Hegel discusses Rousseau on will, contract, and freedom, and in the *Philosophy of Right*. While Hegel appears in places to be either underestimating or exaggerating the extent of Rousseau's contribution to a "history of the awareness of freedom," the author believes that by integrating passages on Rousseau from these works we can reconstruct a coherent interpretation of Rousseau by Hegel. Rousseau, Hegel claims, is the first thinker for whom the concept of *will* is the pivotal element of a theory of the right-of-state and who also disclosed to modernity the dialectical-speculative nature of human freedom. The author provides an outline of three major features of Rousseau's political philosophy as Hegel discusses them in the lectures on the Pre-Socratics, on Plato's Republic, and on French philosophy: (1) Rousseau's political "atomism," (2) the fallacious logic of Rousseau's contractarianism, and (3) the "abstract" nature of his notion of individual will as an extreme opposite of Platonism. In the final section of her essay, De Laurentiis discusses passages from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* where Hegel explicates the concept of self-determining identity ("mediated" or "concrete" self-identity) as the ground of any concept of practical self-determination and she shows how this notion of identity, in turn, makes intelligible a metaphysical concept of personhood that Hegel considers both the implicit source of and the effective solution to Rousseau's "paradoxes of freedom."

Merold Westphal's essay discussing Hegel's relation to Spinoza, "Hegel Between Spinoza and Derrida," reenacts the sort of ambivalence (or shall we say, dialectical evaluation?) that was brought out by De Laurentiis on Hegel's view of Rousseau, but for obviously different reasons. On the one hand, Hegel affirms Spinoza's doctrine of the one, infinite substance as essential to philosophical speculation (philosophical holism, both ontological in that the one substance is *causi sui* and epistemological in that it is fully present to intelligence that partakes of its infinite self-relation). On the other hand, he criticizes Spinoza for not seeing that substance must also be conceived as

subject, i.e., as inwardly active self-determining spirit, which is essential for self-consciousness and freedom as the highest expressions of God. Hence, Hegel holds that philosophy begins with Spinoza's standpoint, but must also go beyond him in articulating the role of subjectivity in the Absolute (and presumably this "beginning" with Spinoza is relative and contextual, given the other beginnings that Hegel locates in the history of philosophy).

But what exactly is Derrida doing in this account? Well, it seems that once we have gone to Kant from Spinoza and realized that Reason's demand for the unconditioned cannot be met without falling into transcendental illusion, we are already thrown into the postmodern predicament. Moreover, the thrust of Kant's critique of the totalizing thinking of Spinoza, which by extrapolation would apply to Hegel as well, is perhaps found in a postmodern such as Derrida—except, as Westphal points out, Derrida considers himself an Hegelian holist of sorts, i.e., without eschatology, completed totality, or the Absolute. I will leave the details of Derrida's "holism" to Westphal's account in his essay and only suggest here that while bringing a post-Hegelian thinker like Derrida into a discussion of Hegel's history of philosophy will appear anachronistic, we must remember that for Hegel the history of philosophy is intrinsically related to the nature of philosophy and that to consider and evaluate Hegel's place in the history of philosophy, without merely reiterating his own view of his place, perhaps requires that we go beyond him and consider explicitly our own temporal perspective—if, for example, Fiala is correct in the claim that the history of philosophy must be *for us*. Moreover, even when focusing on what Hegel thought about the nature of philosophy and its conceptual capacity, we cannot avoid confronting the issue of what philosophy can and cannot accomplish, historically and presently.

Part III. System, Progress, and Culmination in Hegel

The first essay in this section, Kevin Thompson's "Systematicity and Experience: Hegel and the Function of the History of Philosophy," takes up explicitly the issue I raised earlier, and that Angelica Nuzzo addresses in a particular way: the relationship of Hegel's history of philosophy to his system of philosophy. Is there a function for the history of philosophy within the Hegelian system overall? Whereas Nuzzo's essay focuses on the methodological tie between history and system, and hence emphasizes connections to Hegel's *Logic*, Thompson is more interested in looking at the system overall and thus gives special attention to Hegel's *Encyclopedia* as a system of philosophical science. According to Thompson, Hegel claimed that the history of philosophy is the temporal development of the system of philosophy and that it is as such that it fulfills a special function necessary for justifying the system of reason as a whole. However, the history of philosophy appears to

occupy no specific place, no position, within the system of philosophical sciences. How, then, Thompson asks, are we to understand the relationship between the historicity and systematicity of philosophy?

The key to resolving this dilemma lies in the concept of rational justification. For Hegel, reason demands that the system of philosophical science provide its own justification of itself from within itself, and that this same system also demonstrate that it accords with actuality. The first requirement is satisfied by the “speculative proof” constituted by the system’s inherent circularity, while the second, what Thompson calls the “experiential proof,” is fulfilled by the history of philosophy. The aims of this essay are thus to identify the function of the history of philosophy in relationship to the system of philosophical science and to understand specifically how the historical character of this discipline uniquely enables it to serve this function. It begins with an account of the speculative and experiential requirements that reason places on the system of philosophical science and then turns to the challenge posed by the history of philosophy proper, showing how in his lectures Hegel attempted to resolve the contradiction embodied in the concept of a history of truth. The author concludes by demonstrating how this resolution determined for Hegel the proper relationship between the systematicity and historicity of the system, one which keeps both distinct and connected the speculative and the experiential dimensions.

The question as to whether there is progress in the history of philosophy, and indeed in history overall, is for us one of the most controversial. It is not only that since Hegel’s time much has transpired historically to raise doubts about such progress but also that the meaning and nature of progress require clarification and justification. Vittorio Hösle in his essay “Is There Progress in the History of Philosophy” addresses the problem head on. He first presents the main positions on this question, in a triadic order, and discusses them with regard to their strengths and weaknesses. The basic approaches are (a) philosophy without history of philosophy, (b) history of philosophy without philosophy, (c) history of philosophy based on a philosophical view. Within the last position, one can distinguish views that accept progress in the history of philosophy—sometimes linear, sometimes dialectical, as in Hegel’s case—typological theories, and theories of cycles (which in fact assume a helicoid or spiral development).

In the second part of his essay, Hösle argues for the congruence of a helicoid-type theory with Hegel’s approach and on this basis attempts to answer the question of progress in philosophy. He begins by noting that skepticism in the face of the “irreducible plurality” of philosophies is not only an unattractive alternative but cannot maintain its own consistency if it takes a dogmatically negative stance and fails to recognize its own contingency and transitoriness (note the essays by Dudley and Staehler on Hegel’s views on skepticism). Also, we should not confuse progress in the history of

philosophy with progress in the history of science, the latter of which is of a linear character (although Thomas Kuhn would beg to differ). In any case, the scientific study of philosophical development historically requires a unique approach to the evolution of philosophical thought, one that emphasizes the helicoid character of the various cycles of development. The author attempts to sketch the main cycles of philosophical development, sometimes disagreeing with Hegel's explications but clearly operating in the spirit of Hegel's systematic approach. Hösle remarks at the end of his essay that despite the fact that Hegel remains a "towering figure" for anyone interested in the relation of history and truth, we can no longer be Hegelians. Nonetheless, he demonstrates effectively that we can still be (h)egelians in using Hegel's approach as a model not only for reinterpreting the evolution of philosophical thought up to Hegel but also for interpreting the evolution up to our present.

The essays in this collection focus on various issues in Hegel's history of philosophy, for example, relating to method, philosophical science, philosophical beginnings, logical and temporal development, systematicity, progress, etc. It is fortunate that we have an essay at the end of these discussions that is about the end of philosophy as Hegel understood it, an important issue not to be neglected. Jere Surber's essay "The 'End of History' Revisited: Kantian Reason, Hegelian Spirit, and the History of Philosophy" responds to long-standing disputes over the significance and scope of Hegel's idea of an "end of history," especially as applied to the history of philosophy, by arguing that, although this notion must be taken in a "strong sense," its range of application remains limited to the "System of Reason" first outlined by Kant and completed by Hegel. On this reading, based especially upon Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, "Spirit" is viewed as the "ground for the possibility" of the fulfillment of Kant's projected systematization of reason but cannot itself be included within the scope of even a "strong version" of the "end of history."

The "strong version" of the "end of history thesis" is as follows: that "the 'end of history' necessarily includes the complete conceptual determination of the sphere of reason, the 'completion' of the history of philosophy as a rational (conceptual) enterprise, and the 'end' of 'universal' history as a temporal sequence capable of 'rational comprehension'" (212). Among those who would accept this as an accurate interpretation of Hegel's thesis, as opposed to those who would propose a weaker and perhaps more palatable version, there is the critical response that this thesis is a reversion to pre-Kantian, precritical, metaphysics. Surber's intriguing claim is that Hegel's thesis is in a very important sense precisely Kantian, albeit "developed objectively" and brought to completion. It is not just that Kant himself held a view about the "end of history" but that his own "systematization of Reason" signals that end, understood in a particular way.

However, while it is one thing to signal the end or completion of the development of the systematization of “sphere of Reason,” it is another to do the same for the realm of Spirit, the realm of human life, action, and culture. It is clear that Hegel thought his Science of Logic, and his philosophical system overall, brought about an end in the first sense. However, if the “strong thesis” applies also to “universal history,” i.e., world history as Hegel explicated it in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, has not the “strong thesis” an application to the realm of Spirit as well? Surber does not believe so, but thinks that for Hegel the “end of history” must be understood fundamentally in terms of the final fulfillment of Kant’s project in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which means satisfying Kant’s criterion for system, “the unity of the manifold of knowledge under one idea” (217). Still, what are the implications for the realm of world history and for Hegel’s present, other than the obvious point that it must be understood rationally according to guiding principles of the completed philosophical system?

Surber’s quite provocative concluding thesis is that Hegel’s completion of philosophy in the “sphere of Reason,” the construction of a “rational conceptual system,” means that for the subsequent new world epoch “the ‘dominant’ concept is now, in his own ‘present day’ and ‘for us’ as well, no longer reason, but Spirit” (218), meaning that not only will World Spirit continue to take on new forms in the future but that philosophy will also continue, not in pursuit of the already completed task of the systematization of Reason but of the “ongoing task of mediating between the various cultural and historical forms which Spirit continues to produce. . . .” (219). I’ll leave it to the reader to analyze and evaluate this remarkable interpretation, but suffice it to say that if true—of Hegel and of history—we are left with the happy irony that the “end of history” is also a new beginning, one that perhaps offers even greater opportunities than existed in Hegel’s present to build a world that can give greater concrete expression to the Hegelian thesis that “What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.”⁵

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane, introduction by Frederick C. Beiser (University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, trans. Steven Taubeneck, ed. Ernest Behler (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1990).
3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
4. Quentin Lauer, *Hegel’s Idea of Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 7.
5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 10.

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Part I

*Method, Beginnings, and Perspective in
Hegel's History of Philosophy*



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Chapter 1

Hegel's Method for a History of Philosophy: The Berlin Introductions to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy (1819–1831)



Angelica Nuzzo

Hegel held his very first course on the history of philosophy in Jena in the year 1805. However, it was only during his Berlin years that Hegel started lecturing regularly on this topic. The first Berlin course was held in the summer semester of 1819, and then presented again in the winters of 1820–21, 1823–24, 1825–26, 1827–28, 1829–30. The last lecture-course dates back to the winter of 1831 and was soon interrupted by Hegel's death. It is only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the topic of the history of philosophy became recognized as an independent discipline in the university curriculum. Up until Kant's time, history of philosophy had the function of an introduction to philosophy in general, and to logic in particular, but was not considered an independent philosophical discipline in its own right. This is the reason why Hegel opened all his lecture-courses with a general introduction meant to theoretically justify the status of the new discipline. Therein he gave an account of the scientific character of the presentation of the history of philosophy as well as an argument for its systematic necessity as a part of the system of philosophy. These two issues led Hegel to a reflection on the specific method of the history of philosophy. According to Hegel's general view, the method is to be understood on the basis of the specific nature of the object to be investigated. This grounds the necessity of an inquiry concerning the relation between the "idea" of philosophy and its history. Hegel's definition of the logical idea as unity and correspondence of "concept" (*Begriff*) and "reality" (*Realität*) proves itself crucial. Accordingly,

Hegel's central question regards the twofold possibility for philosophy to *be* in history and to *have* a history.

Walter Jaeschke's and Pierre Garniron's critical edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,¹ and in particular the publication of the Introductions distinguished according to different semesters, finally allows for a comparative study of the specific problems that the history of philosophy posed to the development of Hegel's mature thought. Hegel's idea of the history of philosophy is, at this point, framed by the structures of a system that is grounded in the *Science of Logic* as its first part, and is concluded by the figures of art, religion, and philosophy as forms of "absolute spirit." Absolute spirit is, in turn, the result of the concrete development of "objective spirit" throughout the process of the *Weltgeschichte* (world history). In the Berlin Introductions, Hegel's reflection on the method of the history of philosophy is determined precisely by a systematic constellation construed through the moments of "logic," "objective spirit," and "absolute spirit."

In what follows, I examine the methodological problem of the relation between the *idea* of philosophy and the *history* of philosophy in Hegel's mature thought by comparing the different versions (*Kolleg*) of the Berlin Introduction. My aim is not to provide a historical reconstruction of Hegel's argument but rather to offer a systematic problematization of the issue of the "historicity" of philosophical thinking. My reconstruction will clarify the relation between the *logical* structure of the system of philosophy and the *historical* development of the rationality embodied in that system. Between 1819 and 1831 the methodological issue that Hegel is raising remains almost the same. The solution, however, interestingly varies and shows how Hegel's position moves progressively towards an argument that can be recapitulated in the following thesis. The method of the history of philosophy results from the placement that the history of philosophy receives in the comprehensive system of reason. Therefore, the method depends upon the systematic status of the history of philosophy itself. This is the theoretical point that Hegel is investigating between 1819 and 1831. His final claim amounts to the thesis of the identity between the *history* of philosophy and the *system* of philosophy. From this thesis two implications follow: (i) the relation between history of philosophy and Logic is what provides the ultimate foundation for the "idea" of philosophy, for in both cases we are facing a situation in which a part of the system (logic, or history of philosophy) extends in an all-encompassing methodological move to the totality of the system itself; (ii) the second implication of the identity between history of philosophy and system regards the internal structure—or the "logic"—of the history of philosophy. Philosophy's "historicity"² cannot be adequately portrayed by a homogenous and linear movement. Its structure presents, rather, the synchronicity of different movements belonging to different levels of the organization of the reality of spirit.

The Paradoxical Idea of a "History of Philosophy"

As already pointed out, for Hegel the main task of the Introduction to the history of philosophy is to justify its scientific character, i.e., to show how this discipline represents a necessary *Wissenschaft* within the system of philosophy. Hegel's argument follows a twofold perspective. On the one hand, he negatively confronts the ordinary views of the history of philosophy (this includes a criticism of the most recent works on the topic such as, for example, Tennemann's). On the other hand, Hegel investigates the question of the specific object with which the history of philosophy is concerned, in order to positively infer from it the necessity of its scientific method.

The ordinary consideration of the history of philosophy struggles with two paradoxes or internal contradictions that seem to affect the very idea of this discipline.³ Both philosophical relativism and skepticism appeal to these paradoxes and thereby aim to undermine the very essence and validity of rational thought, using the internal difficulties involved in the idea of the history of philosophy. The common conclusion drawn by relativism and skepticism can be summarized in the following dilemma: either we cling to the claim that philosophy does have a history—and in this case the contradiction cannot be avoided—or we accept the conclusion that the paradox of a history of philosophy stigmatizes the impossibility of philosophical thinking as such. Hegel's task is to set out an idea of philosophy and history of philosophy capable of a definitive refutation of these positions. However, he does not simply reject the paradoxes in question, but rather shows how it is precisely their recognition that dialectically leads to the idea of the specific method of the history of philosophy. My suggestion is that Hegel's argument against philosophical relativism and skepticism can still play an extremely relevant role in the contemporary discussion of the issue of a history of philosophy.⁴

(i) The first paradox concerns the tension between the uniqueness of truth and the multiplicity of philosophies and philosophical systems. According to one of Hegel's most general definitions, philosophy is rational knowledge of truth. Moreover, philosophy is the highest expression of the "absolute idea" and thus the highest manifestation of reason's own activity. Truth—as well as that which the terms "idea," "absolute," and "reason" designate—is necessarily one and unique. However, the simple historical "fact" of the multiplicity of philosophies in history seems to invoke an objection to the aforementioned characterization of philosophy. While the definition of philosophy as rational appropriation of truth seems to imply the existence of a unique and univocal philosophy, history, on the contrary, presents a multiplicity of philosophies set one against the other—each philosophy claiming to be in possession of the unique truth, and each one being

the “refutation” (*Widerlegung*) of the truth claimed by the other. The epistemological thesis that posits the necessary (and privileged) relation between philosophical knowledge and truth leads, therefore, to the impossibility of accepting its historicity, i.e., to the impossibility of thinking that philosophy can have a history or can be adequately represented by the chronological succession of a plurality of philosophical systems. Ordinary thinking and philosophical relativism, on the other hand, solve this contradiction by playing out the historical multiplicity of philosophy against the truth-value of philosophical knowledge. Philosophy thereby becomes nothing more than the subjective and private “opinion” (*Meinung*) of different philosophers. From this it follows that the history of philosophy is nothing more than the collection of successive errors committed by human reason in its millenary development. According to Hegel, for example, Kant’s position concerning the history of philosophy amounts to a philosophical skepticism that immediately follows from Kant’s critical claim of the impossibility of a speculative access to the “thing in itself” and to the actual truth of things.

Against the conclusions of relativism and skepticism, Hegel presents his own idea of the history of philosophy. Philosophy is the highest—and the only adequate—form of rational knowledge of truth. As such, it distinguishes itself from both art and religion, which remain incomplete and one-sided forms of the apprehension of truth limited to the elements of intuition and representation. Philosophy articulates its content by means of the concept that constitutes its own form. Philosophy is neither knowledge of an object assumed as separate and different from the thinking activity that knows, nor reflection upon an external object taken as already given and permanent in its givenness.⁵ In the “form of the concept,” philosophical thinking knows itself and has only itself as its own object, for in this activity it produces itself as subject and object at the same time. The form of philosophical rationality is for Hegel “absolute form,” i.e., absolute unity of form and content. This is the peculiar object—and the peculiar subject at the same time—with which the history of philosophy has to deal. It can, therefore, by no means contain merely subjective “opinions”—as there is no such a thing as a philosophical “opinion.”⁶ The history of philosophy is the history of the one and only reason in its universal and fully realized dimension. It is the history of the development of a universal spiritual principle. In this development, multiplicity is not opposed to the unity of reason but is rather the way in which the unity constructs itself in the form of a dialectical process. The dialectic between unity and multiplicity constitutes the dimension of process in Hegel’s notion of philosophy. Hegel’s history of philosophy, far from being the final assertion of a closed monism of reason, is constructed, from the very outset, to account for the pluralism of philosophies. Moreover, in this project, the notion of the unity of reason serves the purpose of excluding the possibility that philosophical pluralism could ever be reduced to relativism.

(ii) The second paradox that Hegel discusses in relation to the common understanding of the history of philosophy regards the tension between the eternity of truth and the historical dimension of philosophy. While the first contradiction affected the relation between philosophy and history by undermining the epistemological validity of philosophy itself, the second contradiction is meant to undermine the very possibility for philosophy to have a history, i.e., the historical validity of philosophy. In this case, as well as in the former one, the paradox is generated by assuming an incompatibility between history of philosophy and truth. Yet, while in the first case truth was construed as incompatible with the very definition of philosophy, now it is presented as incompatible with the dimension of history. According to a classical tradition, truth is eternal. Truth is seen as necessarily outside of and beyond time, history, and the contingency of modification.⁷ If we assume that philosophy is the rational expression of truth—so argues sound human understanding—then we need conclude that it is impossible for philosophy to have a history, for the form of truth can by no means be expressed in the exteriority of a temporal succession of positions of not-truth. Truth is not only one and unique; it is also eternal. Since Hegel's idea of philosophy implies the unity of form and content, the separation of the two sides cannot be appealed to in order to resolve the contradiction. In other words, since in philosophy (as opposed to art and religion) the form cannot be separated from the content, philosophy being thinking that thinks itself, the argument that assumes an "external" history of an eternal content is invalid from the very outset. Hence it seems necessary to conclude that the historical dimension must be denied to philosophy in all respects.

This contradiction seems to affect Hegel's philosophy in two ways. It forces philosophy to deny the possibility of a "*Geschichte der Philosophie*," but also makes any kind of "*Entwicklung*," or internal (i.e., logical, not simply "external" as falling in time) process and development, necessarily impossible. This last conclusion, however, would openly conflict with Hegel's idea of logical development, and more generally with the very idea of "dialectic."

(iii) The difficulties raised by this last contradiction become even more dramatic if the contradiction is formulated in relation to the crucial Hegelian thesis that sees in philosophy the rational comprehension of its own time: "philosophy is its own time apprehended in thoughts."⁸ This definition establishes the necessary relation of philosophy to the dimension of its historical present or *Gegenwart*. In this way, a further specification of the relation between philosophy and history comes to the fore. What is at stake is not only the claim that philosophy, as the product of human rational activity, has a history whereby it is subjected to a temporal development. History itself is assumed as the object of philosophical reflection, for this reflection takes place in the dimension of its historical present, is the product of its own time, and is therefore necessarily rooted in and affected by it. In this case,

the identity of form of content that qualifies philosophical thinking takes up a historical validity as constitutive of philosophy itself.

Hegel's attempt to conceive the unity of the historical dimension in which every philosophy constructs its own system of thought on the one hand, and the rational activity that characterizes philosophical thinking in its specificity on the other, is most clearly expressed in the famous passage from the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (1821). In the Introductions to his Lectures on the history of philosophy of the years 1825–26, 1827–28, and 1829–30, Hegel takes up again the argument of the historical actuality of philosophical knowledge with an explicit reference to the wording of the Preface of the 1821 work.⁹ By presenting the same thought in these two different systematic places, namely at the level of objective spirit in his theory of right and at the level of absolute spirit in relation to the idea of philosophy, Hegel is instituting a crucial relation between philosophy and history. In the *Philosophy of Right*, he suggests that philosophy always expresses in the form of the concept the historical moment of decadence of political and social institutions. In the Introductions to the history of philosophy, on the other hand, he maintains that philosophy always arises in historical periods in which a determinate civilization has come to maturity and then approaches decadence. Through these two complementary theses, Hegel argues that the relation between philosophy and history is one of necessary interaction. The notion of philosophy as self-thinking and self-knowing spirit gains a concrete significance at the point of junction between a mirroring function that finds in the element of the *Begriff* its specific dimension, and a moment of historical causality that determines the form of the concept as the specific reality of spirit. Philosophy is rational reflection on spirit's own historical origins.

However, the claim that sees the work of a reciprocal constitution at play between philosophy and history seems to be explicitly contradicted by Hegel's suggestion that philosophical thinking is bounded to the eternity of absolute spirit. In this sphere, Hegel argues, "thinking is free from time."¹⁰ As knowledge of the absolute, philosophical thinking rises to the dimension of the absolute and its eternity freeing itself from the contingency of time and history.

Hegel's solution to these difficulties as well as to the paradoxes raised by relativism and skepticism is twofold. The first and more general solution establishes the dialectical significance of the relation between eternity of truth and philosophy's own historicity. The contradiction raised by these two dimensions opens up the reconciled dimension of the *Gegenwart* (present). Hegel suggests that the theory in charge of developing this relation and exploring this new dimension is a "metaphysics of time."¹¹ Interestingly, this "metaphysics" is presented as the theoretical part of the history of philosophy. Alternatively, Hegel's second solution voices a fundamental thesis of his

history of philosophy. It concerns the synchronicity between the different spiritual figures of one and the same historical epoch—the synchronic relation between moments of objective and absolute spirit.¹² In this way, Hegel solves the problem of the alleged tension between the temporal dimension of objective spirit and the atemporal dimension of absolute spirit. The history proper to philosophy is the space in which these two dimensions are dialectically reconciled.

The eternity of truth does not imply, for Hegel, its being outside and beyond time. Eternity excludes neither exteriority nor temporal succession. For truth is eternal only because in the self-conscious and conceptual form provided for it by philosophy, it is the highest synthesis of time and history. It is the conceptual appropriation (*Begreifen*) of time and history. This theory is embodied for the first time in the figure of "*begriffene Geschichte*" at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Truth's eternity is the eternity of the present as presence (*Gegenwart*) since it is the very "act" endorsed by a spiritual principle, and the result of a movement towards self-consciousness realized by rational knowledge. Since the history that is proper to philosophy culminates in the synthesis of time expressed by the form of *Gegenwart*, this "history" must be distinguished both from *Weltgeschichte*, i.e., from the history proper to the forms of objective spirit, and from the history that characterizes the other figures of absolute spirit such as art and religion. Hegel's "metaphysics of time" is also a "metaphysics of history" that explores the different meanings of "history" as well as the different meanings of "having" a history or "being" in history.

At this point, we have all the conceptual elements to understand Hegel's solution of the problems posed by the notion of a history of philosophy. In all versions of the Introduction, the process of the history of philosophy is described by Hegel as a movement of *Entwicklung* (development). While with this term Hegel generally refers to the peculiar development of an organic totality, its employment is even more typical and specific in describing the work of a spiritual principle. Its internal logic is guided by the "idea" and does not imply a direct reference to time although is not opposed to it. *Entwicklung* is a movement that takes place in the totality of a system as the movement through which this system is first instituted. In the case of the history of philosophy, the totality is represented by the dimension of the *Gegenwart*. This "presence" is structured according to strictly necessary laws. The *Gegenwart* of the history of philosophy as recollection of its whole "development" is the system of philosophy. This development, in turn, is the process of "realization" (*Realisierung*) of the "concept" of philosophy in the "idea" of the system of philosophy.¹³ This thesis definitively solves the above discussed contradictions: "[1] In the unfolding of philosophy [2] in the existence of many philosophies dominates the idea; [3] the totality of philosophies constitutes the [idea

of] philosophy.”¹⁴ Hegel points here to the necessary unity of three different movements. (1) The one and only philosophy must develop according to its concept—this is the level of what Hegel calls the scientific “deduction” of the “concept of philosophy.”¹⁵ (2) This first move opens up to the dimension of existence and time in which the unity and uniqueness that philosophy exhibited in its concept unfolds in the manifold of the different philosophies in the temporal succession of history, the level of the appearance of what Hegel calls “external history.” This is a necessary moment required by the need for a realization of the concept of philosophy to its idea. (3) In its result, the process turns back to the unity of the concept that is now realized into its “idea.” The idea is thereby the complete totality of the multiplicity of philosophies, for it is their dialectical “truth” (the truth of a result) and recollected “presence.” This idea is the process of the “history of philosophy” proper. Hegel’s solution to the aforementioned contradictions can be summed up as follows: the history of philosophy develops at the level of the exterior multiplicity of systems produced by time, and yet takes place within the totality of the dynamism of the idea of philosophy¹⁶ which unfolds in the dimension of *Gegenwart*.

The Principle of “Parallelism” between Logic and History of Philosophy

The outlined idea of the history of philosophy is a necessary presupposition if we want to understand Hegel’s controversial claims regarding the methodological relation between Logic and history of philosophy. The identity of philosophy and history of philosophy, reached through the mediation of the idea of philosophy as a system, is expressed by Hegel’s contention that the history of philosophy is coextensive with the system throughout all its different parts—its *Gegenwart* is its immanence or “presence” in each part or sphere of the whole. This thesis grounds the relation between the *Logic* and the history of philosophy. The most famous statement of the principle that governs this relation—what I want to call the “parallelism principle”—is to be found in the 1820 Introduction,¹⁷ and is then literally repeated in the 1820–21 *Kolleg*.¹⁸ In the following courses, Hegel maintains the core of the argument. Its formulation, however, grows less and less specific since the relation between Logic and history of philosophy progressively merges into the relation between history of philosophy and system. Eventually, in the last complete version of the Introduction (the *Kolleg*, 1829–30) Hegel returns to the formulations of the 1820 *Kolleg* with an explicit reference to the *Logic*. One of the merits of the Jaeschke/Garniron critical edition is certainly its allowing for a proper understanding of the methodological importance of the parallelism-principle. The comparative study of the various Introductions

makes it clear that the systematic connection that Hegel employs in order to introduce this principle is far more complex and well articulated than the unique text of the Introduction reproduced by the *Werke* would lead one to suspect.

In the 1820 manuscript, Hegel states "that the succession of the systems of philosophy in its history is the same as the succession that takes place in the logical deduction of the conceptual determinations of the idea." This statement is immediately followed by a set of limiting conditions necessary in order for the parallelism-principle to be effectively valid. My suggestion is that Hegel's aim in the formulation of the principle is not to provide a method for the history of philosophy that extrinsically parallels the one theorized in the last chapter of the *Logic*. The necessity of the "parallel" between the two systematic disciplines arises rather on the ground of their sharing a common feature. Both the *Logic* and the history of philosophy are, at the same time, parts of the system of philosophy, and the totality of it. The *Logic* is the first systematic sphere (first part) that provides the foundation of the whole (logical whole); the history of philosophy is its final moment (last part) that entails the realization of the concept of philosophy to its "idea" (realized or actual whole).¹⁹ If this is the reason that legitimates the parallelism, it follows that its methodological normativity should not be understood (as it has been generally misunderstood) in the sense of a device as to how to "apply"²⁰ logical categories to the historical succession of the systems of philosophy. In other words, the principle does not entail the claim of a one-to-one linear "correspondence" (*Entsprechung*) between pure logical categories and historical forms. On the contrary, the method expressed by the parallelism principle operates at the level of the systematic construction of the whole. In other words, it expresses the relation between *Logic* and history of philosophy as a mediate relation that takes place only through the appeal to a third term, namely the "idea" of philosophy. While the *Logic* is the methodological foundation of the system in the element of pure thought, the history of philosophy is its spiritual foundation as realization in the element of self-conscious thought; it is self-conscious spirit that produces itself in real figures or historical philosophies. In this realization, philosophy produces "the truth of the logical element (*das Logisches*) that manifests itself as spiritual element (*das Geistiges*)."²¹ This type of correspondence (the collective and final correspondence of two totalities, and not the distributive one-to-one correspondence of their parts) is the methodological relation established by Hegel's parallelism principle. In other words, the method of the history of philosophy is not grounded upon the historical (in the sense of *historisches*) "fact," for example, that Parmenides's philosophy "corresponds" to the logical category of pure being. For this claim is only the consequence or corollary of that methodological parallelism, not its ground.

With these methodological formulations, Hegel voices a crucial problem of his philosophy.²² An immediate application of the logical succession of the categories to the history of philosophy is not possible, since the “logical element” (*das Logische*) needs to find its truth in the “spiritual element” (*das Geistige*) as a result of an *Entwicklung*-process. This means that the logical method is indeed the necessary condition for the methodology of the history of philosophy, and yet it is not a sufficient condition. In an important way, the history of philosophy is itself the necessary condition that allows the *Logic* to find its truth as the realized “spiritual element” at the end of the system. In a circular relation that plays itself out at the highest level of the system,²³ the *Logic* needs the history of philosophy as much as the history of philosophy needs the *Logic*.

We have to conclude that the methodology of Hegel’s history of philosophy sees in the parallelism-principle one of its essential tools but is not exhausted by it. This principle needs to be integrated in a complementary principle able to express the specific relation between philosophy and the other figures of objective and absolute spirit.

The Principle of Synchronicity Between the History of Philosophy and the Reality of Spirit

The limits of validity of the parallelism-principle are confirmed by a confrontation of the different Introductions. If it is certainly not accurate to say that this principle progressively loses its importance, one has to acknowledge that after 1821 Hegel first accompanies it, and then eventually substitutes it with another, more general principle. The new principle regards a specific form of “parallelism” or “correspondence” that involves, this time, the different forms of the spiritual reality. It can be called the “principle of synchronicity” between the history of philosophy and the general history of the different and manifold manifestations of spirit’s own reality and self-consciousness. Only after having clearly established the principle of synchronicity will Hegel be able to take up again the relation to the *Logic* on a new basis. This is precisely what happens in the later 1829–30 Introduction.

Hegel’s new argument entails two different statements. On the one hand, he argues that spirit remains one and the same across the manifold forms of its existence. It is one and the same spirit that manifests itself in different figures in the State, in civil society, in the political constitution of a people, in the *Weltgeschichte* (world history), in art, religion, the sciences, and philosophy. On the other hand, the principle establishes a more specific interaction with philosophy by investigating the nature of the spiritual prin-

ciple that is manifested in that manifold existence. It is one and the same spirit that is at work both in philosophy and in all other forms that characterize a particular historical epoch. It is the same "*Geist der Zeit*," the spirit of the age, that finds its expression and comes to self-consciousness in philosophy and in the other spiritual forms. Yet Hegel argues that spirit attains a properly philosophical form only when it manifests itself as "the productive principle of a historical period."²⁴ This moment coincides with the historical beginning of philosophy (which is, at the same time, the historical end of a figure of spirit's life and the beginning of a new world). Philosophy arises only when the "philosophical idea" becomes the productive principle that takes the lead in the formation of all other spiritual figures, therefore not only of the philosophy of a certain age but of its spiritual world as a whole. Thereby, the argument of synchronicity contains an important implication regarding the leading role that Hegel attributes to philosophy in relation to the other forms of spiritual existence.²⁵ This role is logically expressed by the function of the *Übergreifen*,²⁶ i.e., by the encompassing and totalizing movement through which philosophy permeates all manifestations of spirit. Philosophy becomes the "productive principle of a historical period" when it "brings to consciousness" (the movement of a "*zum Bewußtsein bringen*")²⁷ in the transparent and 'purified' element of the concept the manifold content of a historical age. From then on, it is in the form of self-conscious reason (not only "*seiende Vernunft*" but properly "*selbstbewußte Vernunft*"),²⁸ that *Wirklichkeit* (actuality), and not simply *Dasein* (existence), builds up its structures. To be sure, what philosophy accomplishes in its "ideal" *Übergreifen* (encompassing, totalizing grasp) of the "real" world is a kind of *Erinnerung* (recollection).²⁹ This act entails, at the same time, an end and a new beginning. To assert philosophy's role as productive principle of a historical age means to recognize the practical role of philosophy in the formation of the historical dimension of the present. Philosophy is not, for Hegel, mere contemplation of a reality that follows its own independent course. Reality, as *Wirklichkeit*, is "objective thought." And philosophy is the highest and most self-conscious form of *Wirklichkeit*. The "objectivity" of philosophical thinking is measured, for Hegel, by the force of its own deeds.³⁰ Hegel's thesis is grounded, once again, upon the notion of "absolute form" that guarantees the identity of form and content in the unique case of the idea of philosophy.

The logical implications of the parallelism principle could not sufficiently account for the specifically historical dimension of philosophy. What was needed in addition was a reference to the process of "development" (*Entwicklung*) that characterizes spiritual movements as such. In this connection, Hegel's internal differentiation of the notion of "history" must be emphasized. The first concrete occurrence of *Entwicklung* is detected by Hegel

in the figure of *Weltgeschichte*. It is precisely at this point that the principle of synchronicity is introduced. Its function is to structure the crucial transition between “objective spirit” and “absolute spirit.” By showing the common spiritual matrix from which all manifestations of a certain epoch irradiate, this principle eventually allows Hegel to present philosophy as the conceptual expression of the “spirit of the age.” In this way, philosophy acquires an essentially historical dimension. Being recognized as the “productive principle” of its own time, philosophy is set first in relation to the figures of objective spirit. It is a force that affirms itself in the State, in the political constitution, and in world history. The construction of spirit’s own reality (as *Entwicklung*) takes place, for Hegel, within the two extremes of world history and the history of philosophy. “When spirit progresses, the whole . . . must progress as well. The external side falls within time; that thinking which is the principle of a certain age, is the unique spirit that permeates everything.”³¹ Thereby, for Hegel, philosophy becomes “identical with the spirit of its own time.”³² Philosophy is this same spirit taken in its active and productive function towards the reality of its historical epoch. This is the theoretical presupposition that allows Hegel to maintain both that philosophy has a history and that the history of philosophy is ultimately coextensive with the system of philosophy.³³

From the principle of synchronicity there immediately follows the need for an analysis of the relation between the history of philosophy and the history proper to the other forms of “absolute spirit,” namely, art, religion, and the sciences. This analysis is for Hegel a fundamental task of the Introduction to the history of philosophy. Thus, he dedicates to it far more attention than to the relation with the *Logic*. In a methodological perspective, Hegel suggests that the comparison between the history proper to philosophy and the history proper to the other forms of absolute spirit should take place according to the two sides of one and the same “connection” (*Zusammenhang*). “The first [side] is the properly historical side of the connection [*die eigentliche geschichtliche Seite des Zusammenhangs*], the second is the connection of the matter itself [*der Zusammenhang der Sache*].”³⁴ The distinction between a properly historical side and a conceptual side becomes the methodological device through which Hegel investigates the connection of the forms of absolute spirit.

It is interesting to observe how the successive lecture-courses differ on this point. The difference is due precisely to the emphasis that Hegel puts on either the historical or the conceptual perspective. While in the 1827–28 Introduction he stresses the conceptual and systematic connection between religion and philosophy,³⁵ in the 1829–30 manuscript he develops almost exclusively its historical side.³⁶

The ground of this twofold methodological perspective clearly lies in the necessity of recuperating a constitutive reference to the *Logic*; hence Hegel's need for an integration of the two principles, the parallelism and the synchronicity principles, in the unity of a process. It is precisely the working together of the two principles, and the way in which they are made to work together, that constitutes Hegel's method of the history of philosophy. This is the method through which the logic of the pure forms of thinking is combined with the specific logic of the spiritual forms. History represents here the element proper and specific to spirit. This explains why Hegel left the parallelism principle relatively undeveloped after the 1820 Introduction. For in his method, the parallelism principle is eventually taken up and transformed by the idea of the logic of the spiritual forms, which is the result expressed in the Introduction to the 1829–30 course.

*The Method of the History of Philosophy is a
Logic of Spiritual Development*

We should conclude by recognizing that the method of Hegel's history of philosophy is neither the "logic" of the *Science of Logic* alone nor a specific "application" of it. The method is provided instead by a *logic of spiritual development*. Its two components are the parallelism principle and the synchronicity principle. The logic of spiritual development is both a *modification* and an *extension* of the "absolute method" presented by Hegel at the end of the *Logic*. The modification of the purely logical method takes place, first, according to the interpretation of *Entwicklung* as history, and second, by conjoining the logical principle to the thesis of the synchronicity of the different manifestations of spirit on the ground of the "hegemony" of the idea of philosophy.

A confirmation of my conclusion is provided by Hegel's treatment of a crucial problem of the history of philosophy that is invariably presented in all his Introductions, namely, the problem of the "beginning" (*Anfang*) of the history of philosophy. In introducing his idea of the history of philosophy, Hegel raises a question that, in its very formulation, literally parallels the crucial question asked at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*. "With what must science begin?"³⁷ Hegel asked in the *Logic*. "With what must the history of philosophy begin?"³⁸ asks Hegel now in his lectures. It is important to stress that the necessity of justifying the nonarbitrary character of the beginning is a necessity that Hegel presents *only* in the case of the *Logic* and the history of philosophy. No other systematic sphere needs such a proof. The reason for this lies in the particular systematic position of these two disciplines. The *Logic*,

being the beginning of the system, cannot count on having its “object” deduced from a previous sphere as a “result.” The history of philosophy, on the other hand, as the end of the system, is not itself a “result” of the previous process, for it has rather to produce the final result of the whole system. Therefore, in the history of philosophy, as in the *Logic*, the construction of the beginning is a part of the science that begins and not the result of the preceding movement. The “parallelism” or “correspondence” with the *Logic* is not, in this case, a matter of content (which category corresponds to which historical philosophy, “pure being” corresponding to Parmenides’s philosophical position, etc.), but rather a matter of method. The question concerns the issue of why the “beginning” itself represents a particular task both for the *Logic* and for the history of philosophy.

In the *Logic* the problem is to exhibit the necessity of an *Anfang* that, being absolutely immediate and indeterminate, could nonetheless constitute the beginning of the self-production of thinking through the complete set of its pure determinations. The problem concerns, therefore, the beginning of the thinking process that is at the heart of the *Logic* itself. In the history of philosophy, Hegel asks the question of the beginning according to a method that combines the parallelism with the synchronicity principle. Since philosophy, being identical with the “spirit of the age” in its pure self-consciousness, is the productive principle of an entire spiritual world that finds its existence in history, the discovery of its beginning will accordingly follow a twofold criterion. Hence, there are two solutions that Hegel provides for the problem of the beginning of the history of philosophy. On the one hand, what is at stake is the individuation of the beginning of philosophical thinking on the basis of the “concept” of philosophy. Thereby philosophy is distinguished from religion and art as the self-production of thinking in the “form of the concept” (as opposed to the form of religious representation and artistic intuition). Accordingly, the beginning of the history of philosophy is to be found where the form of thinking has become autonomous in relation to the exteriority of its expression and is exhibited in the purity of its conceptual and self-conscious form. On the other hand, the beginning of the history of philosophy should be individuated according to its position in time, as being the expression of rational thought in its unity with other historical manifestations of spirit. Philosophy’s destiny is here immersed in the *Weltgeschichte*. It arises in times of decadence, when the individual consciousness withdraws from the corruption of political and social institutions, where individual consciousness cannot find the reflection of spirit’s rationality anymore. Philosophy is the rational activity in which thinking thinks itself and is therefore “*bei-sich-selbst*”—absolutely free in its self-possession. However, freedom of thinking depends on the actualization of the principle of freedom in the world of existence. This idea, which guides the develop-

ment of world history, now becomes crucial for the development of a method of the history of philosophy. It is this principle that allows Hegel to point to the beginning of the history of philosophy: "Philosophy begins where thinking proceeds free for itself. . . . That thinking proceeds free for itself depends . . . from the fact that actual freedom, political freedom flourishes."³⁹

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Bd. 6, hrsg. v. P. Garniron u. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1994) (=Ms.); the text of the critical edition is reprinted in G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Einleitung. Orientalische Philosophie*, hrsg. v. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1993) (=Gph followed by the year of the *Kolleg* and the page number; translation is always mine).

2. It must be noted that the term 'Geschichtlichkeit'—historicity—was not used in Hegel's time. For a terminological discussion of the problem (and of the only occurrence of the term in Hegel's Lectures), see A. Nuzzo, "Storia della filosofia tra logica ed eticità: considerazioni sul ruolo e la collocazione sistematica della 'idea' di filosofia in Hegel," in *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici* 11, (1989/1990): 259–301.

3. See Gph *Kolleg*, 1825–26, 206, 315; *Kolleg*, 1831, 351. In Gph, 351, Hegel speaks of the "contradiction between the form of the historical element and the content of that historical element."

4. A proposal in this direction can be found in A. Nuzzo, "Geschichte der Philosophie als Übersetzungsprozeß," in *Übersetzung—Sprache und Interpretation*, hrsg. v. W. Büttemeyer, H. J. Sandkühler (Frankfurt a.M./Berlin, Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), 25–51.

5. See Gph *Kolleg*, 1823–24, 185.

6. Gph *Kolleg*, 1823–24, 140; *Kolleg*, 1825–26, 225.

7. See A. Nuzzo, "Logik und Zeit bei Kant und Cassirer," in *Die Einheit des Geistes. Probleme ihrer Grundlegung in der Philosophie E. Cassirers*, hrsg. v. M. Plumacher, V. Schürmann (Frankfurt a.M./Berlin: Peter Lang, 1995).

8. See *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Vorrede* 26. For a general discussion, see R. Bubner, "Philosophie ist ihre Zeit, in Gedanken erfaßt," in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), 210–243.

9. Gph *Kolleg*, 1825–26, 239; *Kolleg*, 1827–28, 296; *Kolleg*, 1829–30, 332.

10. Gph *Kolleg*, 1831, 351.

11. Gph Ms., 1820, 29; see R. Bodei, "Die 'Metaphysik der Zeit' in Hegels Geschichte der Philosophie," in *Hegels Logik der Philosophie*, hrsg. v. D. Henrich and R. P. Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 79–99.

12. This argument is developed below.

13. See *Encyclopädie der philosophische Wissenschaften in Grundrisse* (=Enz.) in Hegel, *Werke* vol. 8, hrsg. E. Moldenhauer und K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), §§574–575. Hereafter *Werke* = TW.

14. Gph *Kolleg*, 1823–24, 152–153.

15. The dependence of the history of philosophy on the deduction of the concept of philosophy explains why, according to Hegel, the history of philosophy cannot be a mere introduction to philosophy itself but must be an essential part of its system.

16. *Gph Kolleg*, 1819, 124: "Die Geschichte der Philosophie [ist] die Philosophie selbst und ihre Entwicklung"; *Kolleg*, 1823–24, 152–153: "Die Totalität der Philosophien macht die Philosophie aus"; *Kolleg*, 1825–26, 220–221; *Kolleg*, 1827–28, 293: "Die Philosophie in ihrer ungeschichtlichen Entwicklung ist dieselbe Entwicklung wie die der Geschichte der Philosophie."

17. *Gph Ms.*, 1820, 27.

18. *Gph Kolleg*, 1820–21, 27–28.

19. See *Enz.*, §574.

20. *Ms.*, 1820, 27.

21. *Enz.*, §574.

22. See the collective volume *Logik und Geschichte in Hegels System*, hrsg. v. H. C. Lucas u. G. Planty-Bonjour (Stuttgart: Frommann Holzboog, 1989).

23. *Enz.*, §§574 ff.

24. *Gph Kolleg*, 1820–21, 93 (my emphasis).

25. See the important Remark to *Philosophy of Right* (=R) §271 (G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, hrsg. v. E. Moldenhauer u. H. M. Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp), 1986, vol. 7. 426 ff.) on the relations between state, religion, and philosophy (Wissenschaft).

26. See M. Theunissen, "Begriff und Realität. Hegels Aufhebung des metaphysischen Wahrheitsbegriffs," in *Denken im Schatten des Nihilismus*, Festschrift für W. Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 164–196.

27. R, §31 A. What is brought to consciousness is the "eigene Arbeit der Vernunft der Sache."

28. *Enz.* §6.

29. See for this act of *Erinnerung* the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

30. See *Science of Logic*, TW, 6. 404.

31. *Gph Kolleg*, 1825–26, 221.

32. *Gph Kolleg*, 1825–26, 237.

33. *Gph Kolleg*, 1825–26, 236.

34. *Gph Kolleg*, 1825–26, 236 (my emphasis).

35. *Gph*, 1827–28, 306–308.

36. *Gph*, 1829–30, 335.

37. TW, 5. 65.

38. *Gph Kolleg*, 1823–24, 140; 189; *Kolleg*, 1825–26, 264 s.; see Hegel's explicit comparison between Logic and history of philosophy in *Kolleg*, 1827–28, 309.

39. *Gph Kolleg*, 1825–26, 265, 266, 273; cf. *Kolleg*, 1820–21, 96; *Kolleg*, 1823–24, 147–148, 190, 196.

Chapter 2

With What Must the History of Philosophy Begin? Hegel's Role in the Debate on the Place of India within the History of Philosophy



Robert Bernasconi

In this essay I restore Hegel's treatment of Indian philosophy to its context, specifically to what has been called "the Oriental Renaissance." Already in the nineteenth century the phrase "Oriental Renaissance" was used to describe the efforts of some European scholars to persuade a receptive public in Western Europe that India's cultural achievements would prove as inspirational in their own time as Greek culture had been for the Italian Renaissance three hundred years earlier.¹ I use this context to challenge the idea that by Hegel's time the place, or rather the non-place, of Indian philosophy within the history of philosophy had already been decided. Although at the end of the eighteenth century we find the first extended histories of philosophy that begin with the Greeks, thereby omitting everything that preceded them, enthusiasm for Indian thought early in the nineteenth century reopened the question of the beginning of the history of philosophy.² Hegel was a key figure in this debate and it is appropriate now, when the debate over the philosophical canon is finally being reopened, to reexamine the basis on which the canon as it has existed for some 170 to 200 years was established.

When Hegel consigned India to the margins of the history of philosophy, the place to which it is still consigned by mainstream academic philosophy, he was not following a decision that others had made earlier, but responding to Friedrich Schlegel's attempt to give Indian philosophy an importance it had not previously been granted. However, there is some suspicion

that Hegel in his polemic against Indian philosophy was responding as much to the place Schlegel gave to intuition within philosophy as to Indian thought as such. But after 1825 the context changed: Hegel, who now had at his disposal Henry Thomas Colebrooke's essays on Hindu philosophy, for the first time fully engages the topic. The evidence is that Hegel at the end of his life seriously considered beginning the history of philosophy with India, but that he nevertheless rejected the idea.

I focus exclusively on Hegel's treatment of Indian philosophy because it was the only "non-Western" philosophy that he ever took seriously as a philosophy. Hegel never gave the same attention, for example, to Chinese philosophy. He presented a brief account of the I Ching merely to show how superficial it was.³ Furthermore, Confucius, who was considered by Hegel to be a moral thinker rather than a philosopher, was dismissed with the statement that it would have been better had his works never been translated (V6, 371).⁴ It is possible that Hegel did not devote as much attention to Chinese philosophy as to Indian philosophy simply because at that time it was not attracting as much attention. Indian philosophy was championed by a number of Hegel's contemporaries and it seems that his initial interest in Indian philosophy was with a view to criticizing his contemporaries and the way they looked to India to confirm their conceptions of philosophy. That is why it is particularly important to understand the context of Hegel's discussion.

The foremost proponent of the Oriental Renaissance in Germany was Friedrich Schlegel. In 1808 in *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, Schlegel presented a new synthesis of contemporary research on India, thereby raising its study to a higher level of importance.⁵ He argued that Indian literature should be treated in the same way that Greek literature had been previously (SW, 111; IL, 427). One reason he offered was that the Indian language was philosophically clearer and more sharply defined even than Greek (SW, 173; IL, 457). He also made significant claims on behalf of its historicity. Although Sir William Jones believed that there was a common source behind Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin,⁶ Schlegel claimed that Sanskrit itself was the common root of Greek, Latin, Persian, and German (SW, 115 and 139; IL, 429 and 439). However, the decisive claim was that the wisdom of India derived from an original revelation that could still be recognized in spite of the errors and distortions that had subsequently been introduced: "The Indian system of emanation is totally inexplicable so long as it is considered as the natural development of reason; as a misunderstood revelation it is completely intelligible" (SW, 207; IL, 472–473; my translation). Only pantheism, the most recent Indian philosophy considered by Schlegel and the one for which he had least sympathy, was not based on divine revelation. As a system of pure reason, Indian pantheism marked the transition to European philosophy (SW, 243; IL, 490). For Schlegel, India represented both proxim-

ity to the truth in the form of original revelation and at the same time departure from the truth insofar as it introduced error and obfuscation. That is to say, India was both the closest point of contact to the truth and yet the source of error.

In spite of their strong disagreements over the character of Indian philosophy, Schlegel and Hegel shared the common assumption that the philosophical tradition took the form of a continuous historical narrative. Schlegel's argument for giving Indian philosophy a similar status to that which, since the Italian Renaissance, had been accorded to Greek philosophy relied on understanding India as the origin of the West. The idea of a unified tradition was, therefore, as integral to Schlegel's account as it was to Hegel's, even though Schlegel construed that unity differently from Hegel. Schlegel's view was that because Asians and Europeans belong to one large family in the history of peoples, their literature should be conceived as part of a continuous development forming one large whole: "the mass of one-sided and limited ideas will disappear of their own accord, much will first become intelligible in its connections, and everything will appear in a new light" (SW, 315; IL, 526; my translation). Although Hegel saw similar advantages to construing the history of philosophy as a whole and pursued this aim more rigorously than Schlegel, he drew its lines rather more narrowly, so that philosophy was in effect restricted to Greece and its Germanic development. This was because Hegel rejected Schlegel's presentation of the people of Asia and of Europe as members of one vast family.⁷ For that reason Hegel insisted, against Schlegel and Creuzer, that the study of Indian mythology should be kept distinct from the study of Greek mythology (SW, 311; IL, 522).⁸ In addition, whereas Schlegel maintained that philosophy had declined since India's highest point, in Hegel's view both world history as the history of freedom and the history of philosophy, for which freedom was a precondition, had progressed. Early in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel explicitly contested Schlegel's conception of an original people in possession of knowledge, art, and religion.⁹ The idea of an original revelation ran counter to Hegel's appeal to the principle of development, but it is worth noting that Schlegel had already explicitly contested the model of the mind's gradual development from a state of animal stupidity that had begun to take hold in the philosophy of history of his contemporaries (SW, 207; IL, 472).

Hegel had his own way of negotiating the question of whether India should be conceived as a distant, autonomous culture or as the source of European culture. Although he acknowledged that Sanskrit lay behind Greek, Latin, and German, and that India was the point of departure for the Western world, he dismissed both these claims as "prehistorical" in the specific sense that they did not belong to the historical development of spirit.¹⁰ In

1822 he denied Schlegel's claim that Sanskrit was the ultimate source, and, reviving Sir William Jones's position, he proposed that there must have been a further source behind both Sanskrit and Old Persian (V12, 221). This was an essential component of his denial that India could be identified as the original land, the *Urland* (V12, 221). Because the evidence for there having been an emigration to Europe from India was restricted to what could be gleaned from the study of certain languages, without there being any documentary support for it, Hegel dismissed it as prehistorical. So far as he was concerned, the genuinely historical connection between India and Europe was found neither in migration nor in language, but in British colonialism. Hegel declared, "it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans."¹¹ And he added for emphasis that China would one day be obliged to submit to this same fate. Colonialism lay behind Hegel's account in another respect insofar as he relied heavily in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* on colonial sources, and especially on James Mill, for his knowledge of India.¹²

However, some time in 1824 or 1825 a new source fell into Hegel's hands, Thomas Colebrooke's essay "On the Philosophy of the Hindus," which had been published in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*.¹³ Jaeschke's excellent edition of Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy shows clearly that in the semester of 1825–26 Hegel followed Colebrooke's essay quite closely. Hegel expressed his enthusiasm for the text in dramatic terms:

We first obtained specific knowledge of Indian philosophy a short time ago; on the whole one used to understand thereby religious ideas; but in modern times one has learned to recognize the Indians' own philosophical works; in particular, Colebrooke, the President of the Asian Society in London, has in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society I*, provided abstracts from two Indian philosophical works, and that is properly the first that we have of Indian philosophy (V6, 375–376).¹⁴

There is little doubt that Hegel's enthusiasm for Colebrooke's work was in part occasioned by his recognition that he could use it to establish himself as more knowledgeable about India than Schlegel. This is apparent from the fact that he used the occasion to renew his polemic against his old adversary. Hegel declared:

What Friedrich Schlegel said of the wisdom of the Indians is drawn more from religious ideas; he was one of the first Germans to occupy themselves with Indian philosophy; this did not bear much fruit; it

emerged that he had merely read a part of the table of contents of the Ramayana (V6, 375).

It is remarkable that Hegel judged himself to be in a position to criticize the extent of Schlegel's knowledge, but Hegel's main point was that Schlegel had discussed Indian religion, not Indian philosophy.

In the 1825–26 lecture course on the history of philosophy, which remains Hegel's best known treatment of Indian philosophy (insofar as it served as the main basis of Michelet's version in the *Werke* and all subsequent editions, including Jaeschke's new edition of the *Vorlesungen*), Hegel largely contented himself with a paraphrase of Colebrooke's first two papers. Hegel did not give particular attention to the *Yoga-sutras* attributed to Patanjali that would subsequently solicit Hegel's most generous remarks about Indian philosophy. For his knowledge of it, Hegel relied on Colebrooke, who summarized its contents as follows:

The collection of *Yōga-sūtras*, bearing the common title of *Sānc'hya pravachana*, is distributed into four chapters or quarters (*pāda*): the first on contemplation (*samād'hi*); the second on the means of its attainment; the third on the exercise of transcendent power (*vibhūti*); the fourth on abstraction or spiritual insulation (*caiwalya*) (PH I, 25).

However, there is little or no trace of this description in Hegel's 1825 lectures. He recognized two main systems, the Sankhya and the Nyaya, and in his treatment of the Sankhya followed Colebrooke's division unto the atheist and the theistic versions (PH I, 25 and 38. V6, 381). Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras* is Colebrooke's example of the latter and, through contemplation of nature and abstraction from it, it sets a path to the unity of the soul with nature. Hegel calls this a great thought in which the negation of the object is a negative moment that is already speculative (V6, 382). However, he seems more impressed by the atheistical school represented by a treatise known as *Càricà*, which was attributed to Iwara-Crishna, a follower of Capila (PH I, 23). With reference to it, Hegel explained that beatitude (*Seligkeit*), as exemption from every kind of evil, is attained through what he called "genuine science" (V6, 379). Colebrooke called it "perfect knowledge": "True and perfect knowledge, by which deliverance from evil of every kind is attainable, consists in nightly discriminating the principles; perceptible and imperceptible, of the material world, from the sensitive and cognitive principle which is the immaterial soul" (PH I, 27). Hegel commented that the Sankhya is thereby distinguished from religion only in that it has a full doctrine of thought that is not an abstraction to something empty, but elevates it to the meaning of a determinate thought (V6, 379).

Hegel's conclusion earlier in the same lecture course that the highest level individuality can achieve in the Orient is eternal beatitude as an absorption in substance and a passing away of consciousness, and thus a passing away of the distinction between substance and individuality (V6, 266), is now given a more positive interpretation. Hegel described it as "intellectual substantiality," but what was the goal for the Indians was only the beginning of philosophy (V6, 396). There is no dramatic acknowledgment of Indian philosophy in Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy from 1825–26, as there would be later. Instead, Hegel explained that Indian philosophy is contained within Indian religion, just as the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages is said to be inside Christian dogmatics (V6, 375). "The first philosophy is oriental philosophy. It does not enter into the body of the whole presentation. Rather it is preliminary and we speak about it only in order to justify why we do not deal with it more extensively and in what relation it stands to thought, to true philosophy" (V6, 365). So there is Indian philosophy, but it is not true philosophy. One year later, in 1827, at the end of his first article reviewing Wilhelm von Humboldt's essay on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Hegel wrote that whereas the ultimate goal of Indian philosophy is the same as that of Indian religion, its formation is sufficiently distinct from the form of religion, so that "it very definitely deserves the name philosophy."¹⁵ This recalls Hegel's formula whereby religion and philosophy are said to be the same in content, but different in form. It would seem to open up the possibility of recognizing Indian philosophy as true philosophy. However, closer examination of Hegel's article on Humboldt's essay "On the Episode of Mahâ-Bhârata known by the name *Bhagavad-Gita*" reveals that Hegel maintained some reservations.

Wilhelm von Humboldt's essay returned Hegel to Colebrooke's brief paraphrase of the *Yoga-sutras* and from there to his paragraph on the third chapter. The context of Hegel's return to Colebrooke was a discussion of translation. Humboldt had raised certain questions of translation in his essay, and in particular he had focused on the word "yoga." Humboldt wrote:

Yoga, in the philosophical sense, is the persistent directing of the mind toward the godhead. This directing, withdrawn from all objects, even from inner thoughts, inhibits every possible movement and bodily function, sinks itself alone and exclusively in the essence of the godhead and strives to bind with it. I will express this concept as "absorption" (*Vertiefung*).¹⁶

Before challenging Humboldt's rendering of *Yoga* as *Vertiefung* or "absorption," Hegel took up the question of cross-cultural translation in general:

It certainly runs contrary to the nature of the matter to demand that a linguistic expression of a people that has its own characteristic disposition and culture, different from ours, should be rendered by an expression in our language which corresponds to it with full determinacy, when such an expression is concerned not with immediately sensible objects, like the sun, the sea, a tree, a rose, etc., but with a spiritual content. A word of our language gives us *our* determinate representation of such an object and thereby not that of another people, that not only has another language but also other representations (J I, 1444–45).

Unfortunately, Hegel did not apply these considerations to the question of how the term “philosophy” might be translated into Sanskrit, which might have led him to question the form as well as the boundaries of his history of philosophy, but he did use it as a basis for reviewing Humboldt’s rendering of *yoga* as *Vertiefung*.¹⁷

Hegel judged Humboldt’s translation to be weighty and suitable for expressing the word’s general meaning without conveying its characteristic religious sense. Hegel cited Wilkins, who in his English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* explained that *yoga* was there “generally used as a theological term, to express the application of the mind in spiritual things, and the performance of religious ceremonies” (J I, 1446).¹⁸ Hegel commented: “Our language cannot possess a word which corresponds to such a determination because the thing cannot be found in our culture and religion” (J I, 1446). “Absorption” does not go far enough because *yoga* is

an absorption *without any content*, a dissolving of all attention to external objects, of the occupation of the senses just as much a silencing of every inner sensation, the stirring of a wish, a hope or fear, the stillness of all inclinations and passions, as the absence of all images, representations, and all specific thoughts (J I, 1446).

Hegel granted that the term “devotion” (*Andacht*) would be suitable insofar as elevation is only a momentary condition, but he immediately acknowledged that “our devotion” arises from a concrete spirit and is directed to a substantive (*inhaltsvoll*) God (J I, 1446). Hegel came to favor “abstract devotion” as a translation of *yoga* because *yoga* rises to a complete loss of content in both the subject and the object, thereby advancing into loss of consciousness.

Hegel next turned his attention to Schlegel’s use of the phrase *assiduitatis devotio* in his translation. Humboldt had called this “a very dark expression.”¹⁹ Even though Hegel was anything but an expert, he apparently had sufficient confidence in his understanding of Indian thought to offer his own

gloss on the phrase.²⁰ He explicated the exercise of this assiduity as “the familiar Indian exercise of forceful withdrawal and perseverance in the monotony of an actless and thoughtless condition” (*J I*, 1452). He then recognized that the *assiduitatis devotio* corresponds to the indications that Colebrooke gave of the third chapter of the *Yoga-sutras*, where this devotion precedes the highest level, the attainment of beatitude. After briefly recalling the contents of this chapter, Hegel took up Humboldt’s rejection of Colebrooke’s use of the phrase “meditation on special topics,” a rejection all the more striking because Humboldt had begun his essay by praising Colebrooke’s essays as the first specific and detailed information on the different Indian philosophical systems.²¹ Colebrooke explained that in the third chapter of the *Yoga-sutras* one finds a multiplicity of exercises:

It is full of directions for bodily and mental exercises, consisting of intensely profound meditation on special topics, accompanied by suppression of breath and restraint of the senses, while steadily maintaining prescribed postures (*PH I*, 36).

Hegel in his 1825 lectures noticed Colebrooke’s description (*V6*, 388), but ignored the phrase “meditation on special topics.” In the 1827 essay he gave it his full attention. Recognizing the indeterminacy of Colebrooke’s exposition, Hegel insisted that reflection on specific objects is characteristic much more of *Sankhya*, by which he meant its atheist form, and that, insofar as it is found in Patanjali’s *Yoga-sutras*, it could only be marginal (*J I*, 1453). This is surprising given that Colebrooke introduced the phrase “meditation on special topics” specifically with reference to Patanjali’s *Yoga-sutras*. It reflects not only a certain arbitrariness in Hegel’s approach, but also perhaps a shift in his interest toward Patanjali’s *Yoga-sutras* which, even in the first part of his essay, was diminished in favor of the atheistic *Sankhya* of Capila.

Although Hegel’s treatment of Indian philosophy in his 1829–30 lectures was not included in Garniron and Jaeschke’s new edition and, like his 1827–28 lectures, is known only through the extracts published by Hoffmeister in 1944, there is enough information available to make it worthwhile to explore the basis of Hegel’s momentous admission there that Oriental philosophy could be treated as “actual philosophy” (*V6*, 346). Hegel explained later in the same lecture course:

The fourth chapter treated “abstraction or spiritual isolation (*Vereinzelung*).”²² This is the highest beatitude. Brahma is not more than this. All the gods enjoy this beatitude, insofar as they are represented in this self thinking, insofar as they are devoted to this abstraction and are maintained therein. The full teaching of this is

philosophy proper, wherein this beatitude is no longer direct contemplation (*Anschauung*), absorption in itself, but can be attained only through determinate contemplation of nature and of spirit.²³

It is important to recognize that in this passage Hegel did not actually identify Indian philosophy as philosophy proper.²⁴ Hegel found in India only absorption and not the determinate contemplation of nature and of spirit, such as he himself set out in the *Encyclopedia*.

For Hegel to locate Indian philosophy within the history of philosophy proper, he would need, on his own criteria, to be able to establish a direct historical connection between Indian philosophy and Greek philosophy, and he had not moved on that point. But Hegel did not have to recognize Indian philosophy as “philosophy proper” as a precondition of including it in the main body of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, any more than he had to establish a direct historical connection between India and Greece as a basis for including India in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Even if India did not belong to history proper, it could be included in the philosophy of history, whereas, in his view, Africa could not. When in the course of his explication of the philosophy of Gotama Hegel presented intellectual substantiality as the goal of Indian philosophy and the beginning of European philosophy (V6, 396), he gave an indication of how Indian philosophy might be integrated into his more general account of the history of philosophy.

Hegel recognized this possibility when he acknowledged earlier in the 1829–30 lecture course that he was apparently faced with a choice:

We encounter Oriental philosophy first. We can regard it as the first part, thus as actual philosophy, but we can also regard it as preliminary, as a presupposition of philosophy, and make the beginning with Greek philosophy. The other part is then Germanic philosophy (V6, 346).

Hegel granted that one could find the most profound philosophizing in the Orient, but that it also remained entirely abstract and did not proceed to conceptualization. For that reason, he chose the second option: “Philosophy proper begins for us in Greece” (V6, 347). Where does that leave Indian philosophy? Hegel could have followed the model of the philosophy of history, where Oriental history is included in the account of history prior to the advent of history proper. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel was explicit that history had begun in Asia (VPW, 270. VG, 243; LPW, 197). However, in Asia it remains “unhistorical history” (V12, 115. VG, 245; LPW, 198). It is only with Persia that one enters into world history proper (V12, 233) and finds the proper beginning of world history (VPW, 416). In

one sense, history begins with China and India, but in another sense they are outside the world's history "as the mere presupposition of moments whose combination must be waited for to constitute their vital progress" (VPW, 275). It would seem that Hegel could at very least have allowed a similar ambiguity to surround his placement of Indian philosophy, but he chose not to do so. The ambiguity is there: Oriental philosophy can be seen as actual philosophy (*wirkliche Philosophie*) but so far as Hegel was concerned philosophy proper (*die eigentliche Philosophie*) began in Greece (V6, 346–47). But the ambiguity does not seem to be reflected in the organization of the lectures. It is as if the very status Hegel gave to philosophy made him especially reluctant to expand its boundaries.

I have discussed elsewhere how at various times during the course of the 1820s Hegel expressed his inability to use the distinction between philosophy and religion as a basis for excluding what was extraneous to the history of philosophy.²⁵ This distinction was always going to be especially difficult to sustain when it came to a discussion of the beginnings of philosophy, because the concept of philosophy itself, like conceptuality itself, was a product of the history of philosophy. That is to say, the concept of philosophy is not a historical presupposition of philosophy in its development, although it was a presupposition of a scientific history of philosophy, which is why such a history had only now become possible. However, this complication does not explain why Hegel did not organize his lectures on this history of philosophy, as he had organized his lectures on the philosophy of history, in such a way that India could be included as an integral part of that history. The lack of such an account is all the more striking given that Hegel granted that Europeans could learn from Indian philosophy. This was especially clear in the 1829–30 lectures, even though the interpretation of Indian philosophy that made it possible to make this claim had already been set out in the 1825–26 lecture course (V6, 396–400).

In his 1829–30 lecture course Hegel contrasted Indian philosophy with European thought without treating the former merely as a diminished or primitive form of the latter that could now be forgotten. Indian thought was, especially in its substantiality and in its account of the relation of the soul to this solidity, properly regarded as the opposite of modern European thinking, with its foundation in free subjectivity. This allowed Hegel to present Indian philosophy, in spite of the fact that the side of thinking subjectivity is lacking in it, as a valuable corrective of certain trends among his contemporaries in Europe (H, 288). It also provided him with an explanation of why some of his contemporaries had failed to appreciate the "peculiarity of the Indian spirit." According to Hegel, the extreme one-sidedness of European thought lies in its subjectivity, comprising all the arbitrariness of willing, representing, and thinking. By contrast, solid unity is dominant in ori-

ental thinking, and there is none of the vanity to be found in it that characterizes European thought (*H*, 287). These remarks are isolated. They also show that Hegel's judgment of Indian philosophy remained dominated by his continuing criticism of some of his European contemporaries. But the important point is that Hegel had come to recognize that some Europeans had something to learn from India.

It is remarkable that even though Hegel had previously decided to exclude Indian philosophy, he was nevertheless ready to entertain it as a possibility on the basis of a few lines of Colebrooke's essay, whose importance he had apparently underestimated on first reading four years previously. Hegel was not inhibited by the brevity of Colebrooke's outline. It was sufficient because it gave the inner core of the religion of this people (*H*, 293). Hegel's confidence in this matter on the basis of such relatively sparse evidence is shocking, particularly given his readiness to criticize Schlegel for basing his assessment on part of the table of contents of the Ramayana (*V6*, 376). Nevertheless, at the very beginning of the second part of his article on Humboldt's essay, Hegel explicitly dismissed Humboldt's suggestion that Colebrooke had not told his readers enough about Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras* to be able to judge whether or not it corresponds to what Krishna taught in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (*J I*, 1443). If, on the one hand, it seems irresponsible for Hegel to pass a judgment on Indian philosophy on such a minimal basis, on the other hand, his willingness to recognize the actuality of Indian philosophy at least shows an openness on Hegel's part that should not be lost sight of.

It would be easy to get the impression that although Hegel gave Indian history a place in the *Philosophy of History*, Indian art a place in the *Aesthetics*, and Indian religion a place in the *Philosophy of Religion*, he omitted Indian philosophy from the history of philosophy proper. I have tried to show that things are not as clear-cut as that formulation might make it seem. It should be remembered that India was also not part of history proper, much as Indian philosophy was not part of the history of philosophy proper. Furthermore, after reading about the *Yoga-sutras*, Hegel granted that there had been Indian philosophy and that we could learn from it. It is unfortunate that the key text, Hegel's review of Humboldt's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, for the most part has not been given the attention it deserved.²⁶ One scholar who had studied the texts available to Hegel accounted for his refusal to include Indian philosophy on the grounds that his scheme was "primarily designed to deal with the history of European thought from Thales to Kant and Hegel himself," but this clearly begs the question.²⁷ It makes it seem that the place of Indian thought within the history of philosophy was not a question for Hegel, whereas it clearly did become one, as the scholar in question recognized. Hegel refused a place to Indian philosophy so as to

make a decisive and highly influential statement about the identity of philosophy as Western. His initial omission of India from the history of philosophy was not so much on its own terms, as having to do with a polemic against Friedrich Schlegel, but in the years immediately preceding his death Hegel rejected it again and after careful consideration of the issues.

The chief point of this essay has been neither to question the assessment of Hegel as a spokesperson for what might be called "Western philosophical imperialism," nor to argue in favor of his (or, for that matter, Schlegel's) assessment of Indian philosophy. The remarks I have cited that show that Hegel was ready to recognize the existence of Indian philosophy as such are insufficient to outweigh the fundamental orientation of his thought, which remains heavily and undeniably Eurocentric. My point is rather that, in spite of this, Hegel was more open to the possibility of Indian philosophy, and more ready to look at the latest research about it, than many of us Western philosophers are even today. An examination of the way philosophy is taught in most departments in North America and Europe would confirm that the institutions of philosophy are still for the most part on the wrong side of even Hegel on this issue, and that should be enough to set the alarm bells ringing.²⁸

Notes

1. For example, Edgar Quinet, *Le Genie des religions*, vol. 1 of *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris vol. 1 of Pagnerre, 1857), 55. See also Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950), 18–23; Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, trans. *The Oriental Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 11–16.

2. See Robert Bernasconi, "Philosophy's Paradoxical Parochialism: The Reinvention of Philosophy as Greek," in *Cultural Readings of Imperialism*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), 212–226.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Teil 1*, *Vorlesungen* vol. 6, ed. P. Garniron and W. Jaeschke, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), 373. Henceforth V6.

4. See, further, Young Kum Kim, "Hegel's Criticism of Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 28, no. 2 (April 1978): 173–180.

5. Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*, vol. 8 of *Studien zur Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Ernst Behler and Ursula Struc-Oppenberg, Kritische Neuausgabe (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1975), 105–317; E. J. Millington, trans. "On the Indian Language, Literature, and Philosophy," in *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Frederik von Schlegel* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), 425–526. Henceforth SW and IL respectively. I have extensively revised the English translation and give the page numbers to it only for convenience.

6. Sir William Jones, "The Third Anniversary Discourse, on the Hindus, delivered 2nd of February, 1786," in vol. 1 of *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London: G. G. Robinson, 1799), 26.

7. Although there is no explicit reference to race as such in the lectures on the history of philosophy, I have argued elsewhere that Hegel's decision about the beginning of history proper was decided by him partly on racial grounds. See R. Bernasconi, "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel's Eurocentrism," *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 22 (2000): 171–201.

8. For an analysis of Hegel's exclusion of mythology from philosophy, with particular reference to his debate with Creuzer, see R. Bernasconi, "Krimskrams: Hegel and the Current Controversy about the Beginning of Philosophy," in *Interrogating the Tradition*, ed. C. E. Scott and J. Sallis, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 189–206.

9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*. Berlin 1822/23, ed. K. H. Ilting, K. Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelman, *Vorlesungen* vol. 12, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), 34. Henceforth V12. Also G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Band 1. Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980), 158; H. B. Nisbet, trans., *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 132. Henceforth VG and LPW respectively.

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eduard Gans, (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1837), 146. The passage can also be found in the revised second edition that was prepared by Karl Hegel in 1840 at 173.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, zweite Hälfte, ed. Georg Lasson, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), 365. Henceforth VPW.

12. The British study of India came to focus largely on its political organization, not only because of the practical utility of this knowledge, but also because it was a context in which the British believed their superiority was apparent. This is never more evident than in the extraordinary polemic that James Mill, largely from a position of ignorance, conducted in his *The History of British India* against Sir William Jones. See James Mill, *The History of British India*, (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Roy, 1826), vol. 2, 138. There Mill criticized Jones for claiming that there had been "a high state of civilization in the principal countries of Asia," a hypothesis that, according to Mill, Jones had adopted with the idea "of exalting the Hindus in the eyes of their European masters; and thence ameliorating the temper of the government." See also Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 11, and Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India," *The Cambridge Journal*, 5 (1951–52): 19–33.

13. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, "On the Philosophy of the Hindus," in vol. 1 of *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1824), vol. 1 19–42, 92–118, 439–466, 549–579, and vol. two, 1–39. Although it was published in five parts, Hegel seems to have used only the first two parts. Henceforth PH I. For a valuable discussion of the sources of Hegel's knowledge of Indian philosophy, see Ignatius Viyagappa, *G. W. F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, (Rome: Universita Gregoriana, 1980).

14. This contrasts with Hegel's claim, presumably from an earlier period, that he believed that through more accurate knowledge "the widespread talk of the importance of Indian wisdom had been diminished" (VPW, 393).

15. G. W. F. Hegel, Review of W. von Humboldt, "Über die unter dem Namen *Bhagavad-Gita* bekannte Episode des *Mahabharata*," Erster Artikel, in *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1, nos. 7 and 8 (January 1827): 1 col. 63. The *Jahrbuch* was photomechanically reproduced by the *Verlag für Philosophie* (Cologne) in 1993. Henceforth, references to this periodical will be abbreviated as *J I*, followed by the column number.

16. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "über die unter dem Namen *Bhagavad-Gita* bekannte Episode des *Mahà-Bhàrata*," in vol. 5 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Berlin: B. Behr, 1906), 221.

17. As John McCumber notes, the System is supposed to overcome the limitations that would otherwise leave von Humboldt and the author of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in incommensurable worlds. See *The Company of Words. Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 177.

18. Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagavat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreesna and Arjoon in Eighteen Lectures*, (London: C. Nourse, 1785), 40.

19. W. von Humboldt, *Werke*, vol. 5, 170–171.

20. See Hans Bakker, "Die indische Herausforderung. Hegels Beitrag zu einer europäischen Kulturhistorischen Diskussion," in *Indische Philosophie und europäische Rezeption*, ed. Hans Heinz Holz (Cologne: Jürgen Dinter, n.d.), 44–45.

21. W. von Humboldt, *Werke*, vol. 5, 191 and 222.

22. Colebrooke's phrase was "abstraction or spiritual insulation" (*PH I*, 25). "Isolation" is the term used by James Haughton Woods to translate *Kaivalya* in his edition of *The Yoga-System of Patanjali*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), xl.

23. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Einleitung. System und Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1944), 293–294. Henceforth *H*.

24. So far as I am aware, Wilhelm Halbfass has given the most careful attention to these passages, but my understanding of them is somewhat different. *India and Europe*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 97–98. I am here also correcting my interpretation in "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin?" 174–175.

25. I have examined the role of the distinction between philosophy and religion in Hegel's discussion of Indian philosophy in "Religious Philosophy: Hegel's Occasional Perplexity in the Face of the Distinction between Philosophy and Religion," a lecture delivered to the Hegel Society of Great Britain in Oxford in September 2000. It will be published in the *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*.

26. Notable exceptions are Michel Hulin, *Hegel et l'Orient* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), 207–215; Clemens Menze, "Das Indische Altertum im der Sicht Wilhelm von Humboldts und Hegels," *Hegel Studien Beiheft* 27 (1986): 245–294; Helmut Gipper, "Understanding as a Process of Linguistic Appropriation," in *Studies in the History of Western Linguistics*, ed. Theodora Bynon and F. R. Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1986), 109–128; and Merold Westphal, “Hegel and Freedom,” *The Owl of Minerva* 20, no. 2, (1989): 199–201.

27. Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 88.

28. Some of the research in this essay was presented as a paper at the Asia Society in Calcutta at a meeting organized by Anindita Balslev in January 1997. This paper is dedicated to her and to her program of cross-cultural conversation.

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Chapter 3

The Dawning of Desire: Hegel's Logical History of Philosophy and Politics



Andrew Fiala

In world-history philosophy begins where free people have appeared. This happens first with the Greek people in the West (*Abendland*). In the East (*Morgenland*), the subjectivity of consciousness only dawned (*geht auf*); only in the West does spirit go down into itself (*geht nieder in sich selbst*). . . .

It is not merely a relative dawn and a relative evening, but rather it is an essentially different world.¹

Hegel claims that philosophy begins in the transition from East to West. "Philosophy proper commences in the West."² Hegel also links the origin of philosophy to the origin of the development toward political freedom that occurs with the Greeks. "Philosophy only appears in history where and in as far as free institutions are formed."³ This would seem to create a chicken-or-egg problem, as the formation of free political institutions depends on the philosophical idea of freedom and vice versa. For philosophy to occur, we need political freedom; for political freedom to occur, we need the idea of free spirit. Hegel resolves this by locating both philosophy and politics in the general spirit of Greek culture. Both the history of philosophy and the history of political institutions begin with the Greeks because the Greeks shared both the original political idea of freedom that gives rise to philosophical reflection and the philosophical self-consciousness of spirit that gives

rise to the project of political freedom. Significantly, Hegel argues that both the political and philosophical transformations that occur with the Greeks mark radical breaks from preceding history. This radical transformation creates as Hegel says above “an essentially different world.” In this chapter, I will critique the way in which Hegel resolves this chicken-or-egg dilemma. I will indicate that Hegel’s account contains a Eurocentric bias and that the language of “drive” and “desire” that occurs in Hegel’s *History of Philosophy* indicates the limits of his account.

Despite these criticisms, I will attempt to defend Hegel by discussing his view of the logic of history. For Hegel, the history of philosophy is a story we tell ourselves about the origins of our own way of thinking. As historians of philosophy, we want to know exactly what counts as philosophy and what conditions its appearance so we can search for its origins. However, to begin this history, we must presuppose an idea of what philosophy is, as well as an idea of its connection to the history of political life in which it occurs. In the preface to the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel tells us that “the history of a subject is necessarily intimately connected with the conception which is formed of it.”⁴ We justify our history of philosophy by appealing to a concept of philosophy that is itself the result of this history. One way out of this circle would be simply to ground philosophy in political life, as Marx, for example, does. However, Hegel states, quite clearly and explicitly, that the relation between philosophy and politics is not simply a matter of causal or temporal order. The category of causality should not be applied to the originary relationship between philosophy and politics. “Hence political history, forms of government, art and religion are not related to philosophy as its causes, nor, on the other hand, is philosophy the ground of their existence—one and all have the same common root, the spirit of the time.”⁵ In other words, philosophy and politics are the same thing in different forms: a difference expressed in the difference (and similarity) between Absolute and Objective spirit. The history of philosophy and the history of political freedom are two different accounts of the same thing, spirit, in its different modes of expression.

The problem is to comprehend the originary relationship between these different expressions of spirit without reducing one to the other. This is a difficult task, one that I am not sure Hegel completes. The limits of Hegel’s account are indicated by the language of desire that occurs in his *History of Philosophy* as well as recurrent metaphors such as the “flash” of thought that initiates the “dawning” of philosophy in the West (*Abendland*). Such difficulties are understandable if we recognize that the problem of origins is primarily a problem for *us*, the historians of philosophy who, from the vantage point of evening, ask the question of the dawning of our own desire for philosophical self-consciousness. We undertake this project so that we may better understand ourselves and thus be prepared to “greet the dawn (*Morgenröte*) of a

better time,” as Hegel says in his preface to the *History of Philosophy*.⁶ This new dawn is our own future, a future that develops from out of our conception of our past.⁷

The Logic of Development

Insight into the systematic relation between philosophy and politics can be found in Hegel's account of the organic developmental structure of history and the movement of spirit from its *implicit* form, named by Hegel under a series of synonyms which includes capacity, power, being-in-itself, *potentia*, and *dynamis*, to its *explicit* form, named by another set of synonyms including being-for-itself, actuality, *actus*, and *energeia*.⁸ Hegel does not deny that there is a circle here. His notion of development is a complex systematic affair: the end of history follows from its origin and its origin is known retrospectively from the vantage point of the end. The explicit development in history of the implicit idea is merely a “going within” into the implicit. At the same time, to comprehend what is implicit is to “go out” into history and the development of the implicit idea. Both of these movements of thought, seeing the differences and similarities in development from origin to end, are part of a proper philosophical idea of history. From this perspective, the idea of history is ambiguous. History is, on the one hand, the *objective unfolding*, in time, of events. On the other hand, it is the *rational reconstruction* of these events. Although it is natural *for us* to ask the question of the temporal and causal relation between philosophy and politics, it is important to recognize that such a question occurs only in retrospect as *we* attempt to locate the origin of philosophy as *we* recollect its history. Temporal and causal sequences are ordered retrospectively by us, i.e., by we who have some idea of the development we seek to organize.

To explain historical development, Hegel contrasts it with nonhistorical development. Organic processes that are nonhistorical include the development of a plant from its seed and the development of a human child from its parent. In both of these cases, the developmental process is circular, with the origin moving toward its end only to reproduce itself in the next successive generation. If such development were indeed a mere circle without progress, we might conclude that in such cases, although there is *development*, there is no *history*. While *organic development* involves the process of making implicit potential into explicit actuality and repeating the process ad infinitum, *historical development* also includes the process of becoming conscious of this process. Thus Hegel claims that the process of development, which is circular in nature, is “otherwise” for spirit: “in spirit it is otherwise: it is consciousness and therefore it is free, uniting in itself the beginning and

the end.”⁹ This process involves consciousness of the sameness connecting origin and end, as well as the difference separating them. This is exactly what history is: it is the appropriation of our own seemingly alien development, the turn to the origin from the vantage point of the end.¹⁰ Historical progress occurs as spirit becomes conscious of itself in its development. Moreover, this historical self-consciousness occurs in the present as we recollect our past. *Our* desire for historical self-comprehension leads *us* to search for the origin of this desire, i.e., that point in time when what was implicit began to become explicit.

According to Hegel’s histories (of both philosophy and politics) our origin is to be found in the transition from East to West, most notably in the transition from Eastern despotism and religious philosophy to Greek freedom and philosophy proper. Despite Hegel’s warnings about an “external” approach to the history of philosophy, which would focus on the geographic and political development of philosophical thought, a proper comprehension of the relation between politics and philosophy is crucial for an understanding of the history of philosophy. Despite his warnings, Hegel does not ignore political and geographical details in his account of the Greek dawning. Hegel tells us that Thales’s new type of thinking, for example, was conditioned by Ionian political diversity, which led him to search for universal principles that underlie difference.¹¹ Moreover, Thales’s revolution was also conditioned by the “appearance of freedom” that occurred during Greek struggles with the Persian empire.¹² Finally, geography matters. As Hegel says, “geographical distinction makes its appearance in the manifestation of thought, in the fact that with the Orientals a sensuous, material side is dominant, and in the West (*Abendlande*), thought, on the contrary prevails.”¹³ Moreover, even within the Greece of the pre-Socratics this geographical distinction occurs: the Italian Greeks were supposedly more idealistic (as Pythagoras is supposed to be), while the Ionian Greeks were more naturalistic (as Thales is supposed to be).

The problem is that, in acknowledging the geographical and political ground of philosophical reflection, Hegel makes it appear that philosophical insight depends on contingent externalities, as if Thales’s search for truth were somehow “caused” by geographical and political life. As an antidote to this, Hegel claims that “actual freedom develops political freedom, and this only begins where the individual knows himself as an independent individual to be universal and real, where his significance is infinite, or where the subject has attained the consciousness of personality and thus desires to be esteemed for himself alone.”¹⁴ From this perspective, philosophical insight into individuality is a necessary precondition for political freedom and thus for the creation of those free institutions under which philosophy appears: the Ionians’ troubles with Persia would thus be the result of Greek individualism.

We thus fall back on the chicken-or-egg dilemma. To solve this problem, it is important to recognize that our historical account of the origin of philosophy depends on our current conception of philosophy: it is a story we tell ourselves about the origin of our own way of thinking. The philosophical and political transformations that occur in ancient Greece possess temporal and causal significance because *we*, historians reflecting upon ourselves, trace our origin back to this moment. Since we recognize the necessary connection between political freedom and philosophical thought, we look for a social and political origin of Thales's thought. Likewise, we discount the developments of Eastern thought, where "the idea has not become objective" because it does not find its basis in "the real freedom of the subject" that we view as fundamental.¹⁵ The chicken-or-egg dilemma is a problem for *us*, i.e., for historians of philosophy who want to comprehend the relation between philosophy and history.

This interpretation can rapidly devolve into cultural relativism unless we can answer the following questions. Why do we demand this self-consciousness of our own history? Why do we feel that philosophy must take account of its own history? Is there anything necessary about the objective unfolding of events and our historical self-consciousness?

Hegel wants to maintain that there is necessity in this development. He claims, for example, that the Greek trajectory is inaugurated with the Greeks' sense of history—that this is somehow necessary to the origin of philosophy. The Greeks, he claims, self-consciously denied their "foreign," i.e., Oriental, origins in order to make themselves at home in the world. This inaugural historical rupture allows *us*, Hegel claims, speaking to his fellow historians of philosophy, to ignore any further "retrogression" beyond the Greeks, because the Greeks began the process of taking history seriously.¹⁶ Moreover, this historical inauguration in which the Greeks were "making what they are to be also a sort of Mnemosyne" is, Hegel claims, what makes it "requisite that philosophy should arise amongst them."¹⁷ In other words, philosophy begins when the Greeks denied their foreign inheritance and asserted the origin of their own historical progress. Hegel is fully aware that the Greeks were causally and temporally related to previous cultures such as Persia and Egypt. However, what is significant for Hegel is that the Greeks self-consciously asserted the origin of a new tradition of freedom and thinking. It is this self-conscious self-assertion that identifies them as the founders of the Western philosophical and political tradition.

This returns us to our problem, however: why did this self-conscious self-assertion in political institutions and in philosophical thought occur? Hegel attempts to resolve this problem by looking at it from both sides. Each side represents a different notion of "priority" or "origin." On the one hand, political life is temporally prior. Political transformations thus form the historical origin

of Thales's philosophical activity. Hegel tells us that first Thales was a political advisor before he became a philosopher.¹⁸ On the other hand, spirit is logically prior in the sense that the meaning of history is implicit in its historical origin. Thales's philosophical reflection is thus required for political development to come to fruition: he must have had an implicit idea of freedom when he attempted to defend the freedom of the Greek cities in his efforts as a political agent. This is, as we've seen, ambiguous. While Hegel argues that the end of history (its philosophical development) is present in history as its implicit idea, he also argues that philosophical activity temporally depends on previous political development. While philosophy depends on temporal developments in political life, this dependence does not make philosophy contingent on the seemingly arbitrary occurrences of political history. Rather, development that runs through political actuality up to philosophical comprehension is necessary, i.e., it is the necessary unfolding of the implicit idea that grounds the totality (even, we might add, somehow organizing the geographical distribution of Greek philosophical thought and distinguishing it in this way from Oriental "substantiality"). Thus the originary act of memory that occurs in Greece is not an arbitrary occurrence; rather it is part of the necessary development of spirit. Spirit develops toward the West, as it were. We see this necessity in retrospect as we attempt to memorialize the origin of the spirit of Western philosophy. We see ourselves as descendents of the Greeks because we understand ourselves in terms of the political, philosophical, and historical activities of spirit that we see in the Greeks.

Metaphors and Limits

Hegel's account clearly contains a recipe for Eurocentrism, although we must be careful because such a charge is itself anachronistic. Hegel is Eurocentric; however, we cannot expect a philosopher of the early nineteenth century not to be. What is interesting about this problem is that, in Hegel, we see Eurocentrism stretched to the point of breaking. Hegel's talk of the geographical distribution of self-consciousness, for example, is silly. Moreover, we see him constrained by a metaphorical system that hinders his thinking: the language of East (*Morgenland*), West (*Abendland*), dawning, and the owl of Minerva metaphor form a Procrustean metaphorical structure into which Hegel forces the history of philosophy. As we shall see, Hegel's metaphors indicate the limits of his account. Although it is too much to suggest that Hegel was aware of these limits, it is clear that these limits were broached.

One of these limits can be seen in Hegel's discussion of the mechanism of the logic of development: an urge or desire impels history to unfold. In speaking of organic development, Hegel indicates that the movement from

implicit to explicit is an impulse or desire (*Trieb*). He says of the seed, for example, that “the germ cannot remain merely implicit, but is impelled towards development, since it presents the contradiction of being only implicit and yet not desiring to be so” (*Er hat den Trieb, sich zu entwickeln; er kann es nicht aushalten, nur an sich zu sein. Der Trieb ist der Widerspruch, daß er nur an sich ist und es doch nicht sein soll. Der Trieb setzt in die Existenz heraus.*)¹⁹ Development is understood in terms of a force that impels it forward by the mechanism of desire. We see this trope recur in Hegel’s discussion of the development of spirit. “This being-at-home-with-self, or coming-to-self of spirit may be described as its complete and highest end: it is this alone that it desires (*Nur dies will er*) and nothing else.”²⁰ Desire and impulsion constitute the life of spirit. Hegel uses this language in other places in his work. In the *Logic*, Hegel states, for example, that if the concept of the state did not correspond with its actuality, the implicit concept would exist in individuals as “an urge (*Trieb*) so powerful that they are impelled to translate it into reality. . . .”²¹ In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains this further by telling us that “The absolute determination or, if one prefers, the absolute drive (*absolute Trieb*) of the free spirit is to make its freedom into its object.”²² For Hegel, the development of self-conscious freedom in both the creation of free political institutions and in the philosophical comprehension of these is the drive, instinct, desire, and life of spirit.

It is crucial to remember that the implicit drive that begets the movement of events in history is the same as the drive of spirit that returns to recollect this history in self-consciousness. In other words, the language of drive serves to mediate the two meanings of the term ‘history’: history as the unfolding of natural events and history as the recollection and internalization (*Erinnerung*) of this process.²³ We identify with the Greeks because in them we see the same drive toward self-consciousness that leads us to history in the first place. History, in the objective sense of events unfolding in time, is not completed until there is history in the subjective sense of a narration which gives meaning to these events. In the history of philosophy we see a diversity of “philosophies” arrayed through time. When we construct a history of philosophy, however, we desire to unify this diversity. This desire for unity is what Hegel calls the “instinct of reason (*Instinkt der Vernunft*).”²⁴ The life of spirit is characterized by this instinct: “as desire (*Trieb*) it presses in through hunger and through thirst toward truth, toward knowledge itself.”²⁵ Just as we want to find truth and unity amid the diversity of so-called “philosophies,” we desire a return to the origin of philosophy as a way to fulfill this desire. The return to the origin helps us comprehend the implicit idea that is the origin of our desire for truth.

We wonder whether there is a moment in time at which events in time begin to be reflected upon, i.e., whether there is a moment in history at

which the desire for truth arises and in which the history of philosophy begins. In his *History of Philosophy*, Hegel indicates that this moment occurred with the Greeks' original act of self-remembrance: a moment at which human beings first asked about the truth of human being so that they could, as Hegel says, begin to be at home with themselves. "Philosophy is being at home with self (*zu Hause*), just like the homeliness of the Greek; it is man's being at home in his mind, at home with himself."²⁶ This is quite a provocative definition of what philosophy is: it is the desire for truth combined with a desire for being-at-home-with self. These two combine to make it necessary to take up the history of philosophy: the history of philosophy is the process of comprehending the origins of our own philosophical activity so that we might be "at home" with it. Hegel concludes by stating that if we are at home with the Greeks, if we understand what philosophy is, we may "remain with them without requiring to seek for further and external influences."²⁷ Hegel thus closes the hermeneutic circle by saying that if we understand what philosophy is, we will agree that it originates with the Greeks.

Unfortunately, the very problem that leads us to turn to the history of philosophy is that we are not yet sure about why we should remain with the Greeks because we are not yet sure of what philosophy is. This is especially true for us today, as we are skeptical about the Eurocentric biases in Western philosophical thought. A significant objection to Hegel's account is a recognition of how deeply Eurocentric his history of philosophy is. Hegel's Eurocentrism follows from the logic of the history of philosophy, which we have just elucidated. Hegel closes the hermeneutic circle by claiming that we should view the Greeks as originary for us because their culture is like ours in ways that Oriental culture is not. Hegel claims, for example, that we share aesthetic sensibilities, as well as political and moral ideas, with the Greeks; thus their thinking is enough like ours to be called the origin of our way of thinking. Such an argument, unfortunately, merely affirms the Eurocentric bias of Hegel's *History of Philosophy* by stating explicitly that the history of philosophy is in fact only concerned with the history of people who are like us. Such an approach to the history of philosophy thus cannot take Indian or other non-Western thought seriously as philosophy. This poses a serious limit for Hegel's account, despite his burgeoning recognition that Indian philosophy was in fact philosophy.²⁸

A further objection to Hegel's account deals more directly with the limits discovered in the language of drive and desire. This language seems to introduce a heterogenous element to the project of spirit—the natural. However, we must remember that nature is merely the implicit form of spirit. The drive to externalize and sublimate externality, i.e., the drive toward self-consciousness, is the desire, the demand, the life that is spirit. The drive of spirit is natural because nature is itself the drive to become spiritual. One

might object that Hegel's discussion of development is hampered by his claims about the *unconscious* necessity of historical development that drives spirit beyond nature. Talk about the natural origin of philosophy in an urge or desire seems to undermine the Hegelian project of making thinking self-conscious. Hegel admits that mysterious depths remain unplumbed at the origin of history, as the Greeks buried the foreign origin of their own culture in the "darkness of the mysteries which they have kept secret from themselves."²⁹ All of this unconscious mystery demands explanation. After all, one might object, the seed could fail to develop into the plant. We want to know *why* the natural potentiality of history begins to become actualized in the Greek dawn.

In the organic realm, clearly, environmental factors play a role in the eventual actualization of potential: water, sun, and soil are needed for the germ to develop. One wonders then, what it is about the natural environment of Greek life, its physical geography, etc., that originated philosophical thought. If it were all a natural development, we should be able to locate specific causal antecedents. However, causality does not so easily apply to nature conceived as spirit because freedom disrupts the notion of a simple causal relation. As Aristotle notes, developmental processes become more complicated when we move beyond the organic realm and begin to consider the realm of rational beings. Aristotle writes: "And every potency with reason is capable of causing both contraries, but every nonrational potency can cause only one; for example, heat can cause only heating, but the medical art can cause sickness as well as health."³⁰ Where freedom is involved, there is no simple causal story. It is further significant that Aristotle, anticipating Hegel, links the actualization of rational potency to desire or choice: "So in the case of the rational potencies there must be something else which decides, and by this I mean desire or choice."³¹

Bringing this back to our analysis of the Hegelian history of philosophy, we can see that the problem is that Greek political life, if it were rational in Aristotle's sense, if it were spiritual in Hegel's sense, could have developed in either a philosophical or an un-philosophical direction. What led the Greeks to choose freedom, history, and philosophy? One might say that spirit made this decision spontaneously. However, we want an answer that goes beyond an arbitrary act of freedom. There should be necessity in the history of spirit. Thus Hegel turns to geography and politics. Nonetheless, Hegel does not adequately explain what it is about the West that leads it to the development of its political and philosophical potential. While there is something about the environment of ancient Greece that allows the impulse toward spiritual development to develop in a way that it was not able to develop in India, since this is the development of freedom, these causal explanations cannot give us the whole of the story. The development

of freedom remains in part mysterious, cloaked within the metaphors of impulse and desire.

To fill this out, Hegel would need an account of rational choice in prehistory, i.e., an account of the way in which historical agents deliberated about choices and judged the proper way to attain desired ends. However, Hegel does not import the notion of rational choice into prehistory or the moment of the dawn of history, despite the fact that even prehistorical development is supposedly guided by implicit spirit. The Greeks do not deliberate about the eventual consequences (which include Hegel's recollection) of their fateful activities; rather they act in the world without full self-consciousness of the implications of their activity. Hegel is careful to point out that history is, for the most part, an unconscious development that only makes sense after the fact. If it were true that historical agents acted self-consciously, Hegel's project of a retrospective philosophical comprehension of history would be superfluous. If historical actors understood the implicit nature of human being, they would already have actualized this potential and history itself would have already come to an end. Moreover, if prehistorical agents were self-conscious rational agents, then there would have been no need for history itself to occur. Thus, the Greeks did not consciously choose freedom with clear historical foresight; rather, they were impelled toward freedom by the mysterious force that is spirit.

Conclusion

How then does history develop and why does it develop in the West and not elsewhere? What impels the implicit to become explicit and why does this actualization of the idea only occur in the West? Hegel approaches this question by way of the metaphor of the dawn and the rhetoric of the "flash" that originates Western development. In his attempt to locate the origin of philosophy in Greece, Hegel says that "the light first becomes in the West the flash of thought which strikes within itself, and from thence creates its world out of itself (*das Licht wird im Abendlande erst zum Blitze des Gedankens, der in sich selbst einschlägt und von da aus sich seine Welt erschafft*)."³²

This indicates the limits of Hegel's account: the origin, although necessary, can only be comprehended as a flash. In defense of this account, it is important to note that Hegel is self-conscious of these limits. In his discussion of religious mysteries in the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel provides us with a discussion of the Greek mystery religions. He claims that these were only mysterious to the uninitiated. To a non-philosopher, or a non-Westerner, the flash of the Greek origin might seem mysterious. However, to us, to philosophers initiated into the practice of thinking, this flash is natural and neces-

sary because we see ourselves in what the Greeks did. Moreover, it is no surprise to us that the flash of thought occurs at the dawn of our tradition in the conjunction of political freedom and philosophical reflection that we associate with Western culture.

So how and why did the Greeks develop this sense of philosophical and political self-assertion? Hegel does not provide us with a satisfactory answer. The Greeks did not deliberate and choose to create free institutions and a way of thinking called philosophy. They could not rationally decide that it would be valuable to create free political institutions so that the implicit philosophical idea could develop because this idea had not yet become explicit. Despite Hegel's praise for Greek self-sufficiency, it is clear that the Greeks did not self-consciously arrive at the twin concepts of philosophy and democracy. Rather the cunning of reason was at work. Moreover, and Hegel does admit this, the Greeks owed something to the East. Hegel admits that Greek philosophical development has a "starting point in history as truly as they have arisen from out of themselves: this starting-point, comprehended in thought, is the oriental substantiality of the natural unity between the spiritual and the natural."³³ Greek political self-assertion occurs in reaction against Persia. Greek philosophy owes its existence to previous "oriental" science and philosophy. The flash of Greek thought is made possible by the accumulation of spiritual tinder in the East. Moreover, the spark that ignited this spiritual tinder was not necessarily apparent to the Greeks; it is a flash we see in retrospect.

Political life and philosophy develop gradually by way of incremental changes. It is only after the fact that we can see that a long series of unnoticed changes have brought about a significant transformation in political life or philosophical thought. "On the presupposition of an already existing intellectual world which is transformed in our appropriation of it, depends the fact that philosophy can only arise in connection with previous philosophy, from which of necessity it has arisen."³⁴ It is significant, however, that Hegel admits that the development of philosophy is interrupted by occasional radical transformations such as the flash with which the history of philosophy begins.

Toward the end of his *History of Philosophy*, Hegel claims that another radical transformation occurred in the history of philosophy as the modern spirit burst forth in German philosophy and in French politics. "In Germany this principle has burst forth (*hinausgestürmt*) as thought, spirit, concept; in France in the form of actuality."³⁵ France had begun to actualize the idea of freedom in practice, Germany had begun to actualize the idea of freedom in thought with the advent of the Kantian philosophy. Hegel cannot claim either that the French political development caused the German philosophical development or that the German philosophical development caused the

French political development. Rather, these developments were part of the total development of spirit. What appears as a bursting-forth must be understood retrospectively within the total system of spirit in which we comprehend the connection between philosophy and politics, as well as the connection between spirit and nature, desire and its satisfaction.

In his brief recapitulation of the main themes of the *History of Philosophy*, in its conclusion, Hegel again uses the metaphor of bursting-forth and of the dawning of the light. In this conclusion, Hegel claims that spiritual progress has undergone a subterranean historical development “until grown strong in itself it bursts asunder (*aufstößt*) the crust of earth which divided it from the sun, its Notion, so that the earth crumbles away.”³⁶ He says that the whole history began as “the light of thought dawned upon the Greeks (*das Licht des Gedankens in den Griechen aufgegangen*).”³⁷ Finally, he claims that at the end of the history of philosophy there is “a light that breaks forth on spiritual substance (*Dieser Blitz schlägt in die geistige Substanz ein*).”³⁸ These metaphors serve to elucidate the history of philosophy insofar as they adumbrate the remaining mystery of why spirit develops as it does.

Initiates into the Western tradition of philosophy cannot know exactly why the flash of spirit dawned on the Greeks, although we can know that this dawning inaugurated the mutual development of both philosophy and politics that gave rise to the Western tradition in which we desire self-consciousness of our own history. We recognize the origin of our desire for self-conscious truth in the conjunction of thinking and politics that occurred in Greece. The whole of the development of the history of philosophy and its relation to political life is unified *by us* in the present. Thus questions about the relation between philosophy and politics, problems of the causal, temporal, and logical order of philosophy and politics, questions of drive and bursting-forth—all of the issues we have discussed in the present chapter—occur *for us*, for historians of philosophy who are trying to understand ourselves. The dawning of the urge to philosophize, the bursting-forth of that form of political life that gave rise to philosophy in the Greeks, is thus itself only significant *for we* who live in the evening of the *Abendland*. It is *our* interest in the tumultuous relation between philosophy and politics that leads us back to the Greeks and the first instantiation, as far as *we* know, of the question *we* pose to ourselves about what we mean by philosophy and its relation to our political tradition.

If today *we* return to Hegel and to the Greeks with new questions that stem from our concern with Eurocentrism, patriarchy, etc., we should conceive of these concerns as a continuation of the attempt begun with Hegel's history of philosophy: the attempt to locate the origin of our present concerns. These new concerns are both political and philosophical. They represent a more fully developed idea of who *we* are and of where *we* should

search for the dawning of our desire for self-consciousness and freedom. While our desires are somewhat different from Hegel's, they are nonetheless a further development of the desire for philosophical truth and universal political freedom that is the spirit of Hegel's history of philosophy.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994), 6: 94. This quote is taken from the Lectures of 1820/21. Subsequent quotations from Hegel's *History of Philosophy* are from Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane (New York: The Humanities Press, 1963), 3 volumes; Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke* [Berlin: Hegel Institute, 1999 e-text from Past Masters which is the same as the Suhrkamp edition of Hegel's *Werke* (Frankfurt, 1970)], volumes 18-20. I have indicated citations in the Haldane translation and have noted the *Werke* page numbers where necessary.

2. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 99.

3. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 95.

4. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: xlv.

5. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 54.

6. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: xliii; *Werke*, 18: 13. The Haldane translation indicates this is the preface of 1816; the *Werke* edition indicates this preface dates from 1817.

7. Bernasconi, following Heidegger, indicates two different types of tradition (*Tradition* and *Überlieferung*). He claims "*Überlieferung* is invariably one's own tradition and the task it poses is to take ownership of it: one constructs one's tradition but it is also true that the tradition one constructs helps define who one is" [Robert Bernasconi, "Krimskrams: Hegel and the Current Controversy about the Beginnings of Philosophy" in Scott and Sallis, ed., *Interrogating the Tradition: Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 192]. This is the idea of history I have in mind in what follows: in reconstructing our origins we are better able to understand ourselves in the present and into the future. Cf. also Chapter 1 of Robert Bernasconi's *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1991).

8. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 21.

9. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 22.

10. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 3.

11. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 169.

12. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 171.

13. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 169; *Werke*, 18: 193.

14. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 95.

15. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 146.

16. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 150.

17. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 151.

18. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 157.

19. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 22; *Werke*, 18: 41. Hegel's language of desire, as it appears in the *Phenomenology*, at least, has been examined by Jean Hyppolite in *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), Part II, chapter 1.

20. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 23; *Werke*, 18: 42.

21. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Paperback Library, 1969), 758; *Werke*, 6: 466.

22. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §27; *Werke*, 7: 79.

23. Hegel explains these two senses in the *Philosophy of History* as follows: "In our language the term History unites the objective with the subjective side and denotes quite as much the *historia rerum gestarum* as the *res gestae* themselves; on the other hand it comprehends not less what has happened than the narration of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events. It is an internal vital principle common to both that produces them synchronously" [Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. B. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 60]. Herbert Marcuse interprets this double meaning of history nicely as follows: "On the one hand, history refers to the process of the totality of beings as Spirit; as such it is the unity in process of 'living immediacy' and of becoming what is 'reflected-into-self.' Nature is drawn into history and becomes historicized from within. On the other hand, history signifies only the becoming of self-consciousness that is 'reflected-into-self,' and in this case nature is always the given for a self-consciousness which in the course of its movement distinguishes itself from it. This double meaning of history, which on the one hand refers only to one process of movement alongside the other, and on the other, to two processes as whole, is the true problem of historicity as it develops after Hegel, namely, how to present history as one of the two modes of becoming which at the same time encompasses both modes" [Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, trans. S. Benhabib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 314].

24. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 17; *Werke*, 18: 36.

25. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 18; *Werke*, 18: 36.

26. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 152; *Werke*, 18: 175.

27. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 152.

28. Cf. Robert Bernasconi's paper in the present volume.

29. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 151.

30. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. H. G. Apostle (Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1979), 1046b5.

31. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1048a10.

32. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 99; *Werke*, 18: 121.

33. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 152.

34. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, I: 4.

35. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, III: 409; *Werke*, 20: 314.

36. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, III: 547; *Werke*, 20: 456.

37. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, III: 548; *Werke*, 20: 457.

38. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, III: 550; *Werke*, 20: 458.

Part II

*Accounts of the Philosophical
Tradition in Hegel*



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Chapter 4

Hegel on Socrates and Irony



Robert R. Williams

Although the “Socratic problem” is probably insoluble, the attempt to provide a solution calls for a philosophical response that engages some fundamental questions concerning the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, as well as the quarrel between the moderns and postmoderns over the meaning of philosophy, subjectivity, irony, and knowledge. These questions are in play in Hegel’s discussion of Socrates.

The question of Socrates continues to be of philosophical interest, as evidenced by the recent work of Gregory Vlastos and Sarah Kofman.¹ Vlastos believes that he can identify the historical Socrates in the early dialogues of Plato; in contrast, Kofman believes that concerning Socrates only philosophical fictions are possible. She examines Hegel’s and Kierkegaard’s accounts of Socrates as philosophical portraits or novels that reveal more about their authors than about Socrates. Hegel’s portrait is closer to that of Vlastos and the traditional view. But this prompts a question: Could Hegel’s portrait of Socratic irony be wrong and yet right in his central contention, that Socrates entered into dialogue with others for a positive purpose, namely educating them? Conversely, could Kierkegaard be right in criticizing Hegel for failing to appreciate irony as irony and yet wrong in his central contention that Socrates’s position is irony and nothing more?

Since the oracle at Delphi called Socrates the wisest of men, and since Socrates claimed to know nothing, how is Socratic ignorance to be understood? Is it a jest that tries to transform dogmatism into self-critical knowledge (*Bildung*)? Or is it rather an ironic jest at any pretension to knowledge as such? Is Socratic ignorance a dialogical gesture that aims at truth and communication? Or is it rather a deflating destruction of all knowledge claims as sophistic, including his own? Is Socrates a positive figure in the history of

philosophy or rather a negative, merely ironical one? Was Socrates serious about education, *paideia*, *Bildung*? Or was he merely an ironical jester who destroyed the existing order but had nothing to put in its place? Is Socrates the inaugurator of philosophy? How can Socrates be the inaugurator of philosophy if he knows nothing? Or is Socrates an ironist, the founder of unphilosophy? This possibility was raised in Hegel's day by Friedrich Schlegel, who appealed to Socrates in support of his own account of irony. Hegel takes pains to establish that Socratic irony is not Schlegel's and not unphilosophy. However Kierkegaard believes Hegel overlooked the truth of irony and defends a "Schlegelian Socrates" against Hegel. In what follows, I offer some analysis of Hegel's account of Socrates, his attempt to distinguish Socratic irony from Schlegel, Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel's account of Socrates, and some reflections on irony and the morality position.

Hegel On Socrates

We begin with an overview of Hegel's portrait of Socrates, which Sarah Kofman calls the most influential discussion after Plato. Hegel credits Socrates, not only with inaugurating philosophy as developed by Plato and Aristotle, but also with introducing the principle of subjective freedom, the right of the individual to recognize nothing as right, good, and true except what he can determine from and by himself. Socrates asserts a right of self-determination that the ancient world was not prepared to recognize or acknowledge; thus he came into conflict with Athenian democracy.

According to Hegel, Socrates's target was the sophists. In his attack on the sophistic "man the measure of all things," Socrates employed irony to drive home the contrast between appearance and reality, between apparent good and genuine good. Hegel identifies Socratic irony as a mode of conducting conversation and dialog between persons. Socratic irony is not sophistic dissemblance; rather it exhibits a witty urbanity, a social confidence and brilliance in dealing with ideas.

The principle that Socrates introduces is that consciousness has to bring forth from itself what is true. This brings Socrates into conflict with Greek culture, because it displaces the traditional authority of the oracle. For Hegel, Greek reliance upon oracles is a symptom of a freedom not yet fully conscious of itself, and shows that Greek culture lacked the principle of self-determining subjective freedom. The Athenians, rightly sensing that Socrates was introducing a new authority that was hostile to their fundamental way of life, brought charges against Socrates. They accused him of impiety, of introducing new, alien gods, and of leading youth astray.

The court found Socrates guilty of these charges. However, owing to what Hegel calls the fundamental humanity of Athenian law and constitution, Socrates was given the opportunity to propose an alternative, but still appropriate, penalty. In effect, he could have mitigated the punishment. But in proposing a penalty, Socrates would have had to acknowledge and confess his guilt. This Socrates refused to do, because from his point of view he was innocent. He remained self-assured in his conviction he had done nothing wrong. He refused to recognize, much less bend, to the authority of the court. These refusals to recognize his guilt and to acknowledge the court manifest Socrates's self-assurance and are, Hegel maintains, reasons why, from the Athenian perspective, Socrates was justly condemned to death. In Hegel's words:

Socrates thus set his conscience in opposition to the judge's sentence, and acquitted himself before its tribunal. But no people, least of all a free people like the Athenians, has by this freedom to recognize a tribunal of conscience which knows no consciousness of having fulfilled its duty except its own consciousness. To this [claim] the government and law, the spirit of the people may reply: 'If you have the consciousness of having done your duty, we must also have the consciousness that you have so done'. . . . If this consciousness is no mere hypocrisy, in order that what the individual does should be recognized as duty, it must be recognized as such by all.²

For Hegel, Socrates embodies the self-sufficient morality position of subjective freedom. His self-assurance collides with parochial authorities. Thus, his own world does not recognize or comprehend Socrates, and the result is a tragic conflict of rights.

However, after the death sentence is carried out, the Athenians repent. Hegel comments that theirs is an innocence that is nevertheless guilty, and that seeks to atone for its guilt by punishing those who condemned Socrates. Hegel finds here a belated, tragic recognition that in condemning Socrates the Athenians have condemned their own principle, for their law allows subjective freedom a role, but only within narrowly circumscribed limits that Socrates plainly violated. Hence the death of Socrates, carried out as punishment for his stubborn independence, is a tragedy, not simply a personal tragedy, but the tragedy of ancient Athens. The very subjective freedom and right of self-determination that the Athenians perceive to be the ruination of their culture, Socrates finds to be liberating and healing.³ The condemnation and death of Socrates drives philosophy out of public life while the public realm becomes divided against itself. The death of Socrates is the beginning of the downfall of Athenian Greece.

Two Views of Irony

Did Hegel get Socrates and Socratic irony right? This question turns on a prior question, What is irony? Provisionally we may say that irony is an ambiguity, a noncoincidence between inner and outer, between real and ideal, or between appearance and reality. Hegel distinguishes between irony as an objective negative dialectic where opposites cancel each other out, and irony as a mode of comportment between persons that shatters complacency and dogmatism. Socrates's irony is more nearly the latter, because Socrates uses irony to stimulate people to discover truth within themselves. Irony is related to Socratic midwifery.

According to Hegel, irony is related to freedom; specifically, it embodies a negative freedom that tears itself away from all given determinations. Irony liberates the individual from pre-given determinations, tradition, and the like. As such, irony may be an essential moment or transition in becoming an autonomous self-determining individual. In order to gain "space" for self-determination, the individual must suspend the given; she must regard the given as no longer valid. Irony embodies this negative power of freedom to suspend determinations.

Irony disrupts an established order of determinations; it posits incongruity. For example, Socratic ignorance appears to us, if not to Socrates himself, to constitute an irony: the wisest man is the one who knows that he knows not. Is such ignorance really ignorant, a skepticism that undercuts and denies the possibility of knowledge? Or is it feigned ignorance, a mere sham? Hegel believes that Socrates' ignorance is no sham, but genuine. However, it is not skepticism about knowledge either.

Beneath the ongoing debate over the "Socratic problem" is a deeper dispute between two quite different interpretations of irony: The Fichtean-Schlegelian *destructive* irony, and the Platonic-Hegelian *constructive* irony. These offer different accounts of the ontological implications and presuppositions of irony. In the former, irony is a self-sufficient position, a posture in which the self recognizes nothing equal to or greater than itself, nothing that could limit it. This irony is an absolute position; it is radical, unrestricted, destructive, and self-isolating. In contrast, Platonic-Hegelian irony is constructive; constructive irony is not a final or absolute position, but rather a transition from immersion in finitudes towards something higher that both limits and disposes the self, for example, a substantial interest such as the Other, knowledge, ethics, or religion. Constructive irony involves both liberation of the self from finitude, and a free self-determination that is not arbitrary but in accordance with a substantial interest.

The above distinction between destructive and constructive irony, I take from Kierkegaard's master's thesis, the *Concept of Irony*.⁴ Kierkegaard, appropriated it from Hegel. Hegel believes that Socratic irony is constructive irony, irony in the service of education and the Idea, and he presents a somewhat traditional Platonic portrait of Socrates. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, believes that Hegel's "one-sided attack on post-Fichtean irony" (above all Schlegel) led Hegel to "overlook the truth of irony."⁵ Consequently, Kierkegaard charges that Hegel not only failed to do justice to irony, but also failed to appreciate Socratic irony as irony, and defends Schlegel's irony against Hegel. Let us first examine Schlegel's views.

Part of Schlegel's project (shared by Goethe and Schiller) was to free art from subservience to moral instruction. In contrast to the demand that art teach a lesson, art was regarded as an end in itself independent of any moral instruction it may or may not have. What is this independent status of art? Schlegel believes that art is a game, but a serious game (*ein ernster Scherz*). Thus art is a paradox. It is a dialectical fusion and unification of opposites: playfulness and seriousness, intuition and reflection, both self-intoxication of genius and critical detachment. To produce art, the artist must himself be in a paradoxical frame of mind; he must be both detached and involved, deeply serious about his art and yet capable of treating it as a mere game.⁶ Although the artist must be serious about his art, it is also the case that, in Schlegel's words, "we must rise above our own love and be able to destroy in our thoughts what we adore. . . ."⁷

This paradoxical frame of mind that combines creation and destruction Schlegel calls irony, or "transcendental buffoonery,"⁸ and he refers to Socrates as an example. He is aware that the *eironeia* of Socrates had been something more than a straightforward rhetorical device of saying the opposite of what is meant. Socrates had not merely pretended to be ignorant. When Socrates asserted that he knew nothing, he not only knew more than his interlocutor, he knew enough to know that he did not really know anything properly speaking, so that his claim of ignorance was both true and false, and this ambiguity is irony. Schlegel tells us that in irony, "everything should be both playful and serious, both frank and obvious, and yet deeply hidden. Irony is the freest of all licenses, for through it one rises above one's own self, and yet it is also the most lawful, for it is absolutely necessary."⁹ Again, [Socratic irony] "arouses a feeling of irresolvable conflict of the limitless and the limited, of the impossibility and necessity of complete communication."¹⁰ What is the self above which irony rises? Towards what does irony rise? Are there any limits? Perhaps not, for Schlegel maintains that Romantic poetry is always in a state of becoming and never finished or perfected: "It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free; and it recognizes as its first commandment that the will of the poet can tolerate no law above itself."¹¹

Hegel On Schlegel

Hegel believed Schlegel to be a modern sophist whose superficiality Socrates would quickly demolish. Schlegel was for Hegel a prime representative of unphilosophy. (Apparently Schlegel believed similar things about Hegel.) Every time that Hegel comments on Schlegel, he rehearses his critique of Romanticism. In this critique, Hegel portrays Friedrich Schlegel's position as derived from Fichte's so-called primacy of the ego and representing the worst possible subjective idealism.

Schlegel's irony is ambiguous: on the one hand, irony is an awareness of the limits of the self and its creation, a laughing at oneself, looking at oneself and one's artistic/intellectual creations as falling short of their intention or idea. On the other hand, with his view of the artistic creation and destruction of values and determinations, Schlegel treats individual subjectivity as absolute, draining substantial interests of their substantiality, treating them as mere *Schein* or vanity. This is where the Fichtean background is so important in Hegel's reading. The way irony drains the actual of substantiality recalls Fichte's position in the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) which asserts the primacy of the ego, and reduces everything else to the non-ego. If the "in itself," the other, is a non-ego, this reduces the other to a negation, namely, of the ego. If the other is merely a negation, this implies a reduction of the other, a loss of its substantiality; limitation by other would be merely self-limitation. Hegel believes that Fichte does not go this far because the other, the *Anstoß* and *Aufforderung* keep returning after their apparent relativization by the ego¹²; but Hegel believes that Schlegel does relativize everything and undermine all substantial interests.

When Schlegel asserts that the artist can and should be prepared to destroy whatever he creates, to Hegel he appears as a caricature of Fichte. Schlegel's irony draws upon Fichte's doctrine that everything in the ego exists through the ego. The ego is regarded as an absolute creator of all content, values, norms. Whatever it has created the ego can annihilate again. Hence the ego is lord and master of all its determinations. Hegel terms Schlegel's irony absolute negativity: all content is negated in itself, and reduced to being relative to the ego, or to mere show (*Schein*). In Hegel's words, "in irony everything is reduced, it is put in a form (*Gestalt*) that is completely within my power."¹³ Hence, irony can dissolve any substantive content and regard it as null and void. In so doing, the subject takes up a position above all content and determinations. This is ironic play. However, where Schlegel might have intended such ironic play to be a smile at oneself that comes from a consciousness of one's limits and shortcomings, Hegel believes irony is directed at everything, including substantial interests. For

Schlegel, the ironic self may have limits, while Hegel, focusing on Schlegel's Fichtean background, takes Schlegel's irony as establishing the primacy of the ego and reducing everything to mere show.¹⁴

Schlegel's discourse about irony being simultaneously serious and jest, or a serious jest (*ein ernster Scherz*), is for Hegel merely empty talk exhibiting a superficial sophistic dialectic. If irony is both serious and jest, then it amounts to a reduction of being to mere appearance, because a substantial interest that I am free to create arbitrarily or dissolve arbitrarily is no longer substantial. Irony reduces the substantial, which has being in and for itself, to a mere possibility or something merely optional. Irony undermines substantial interests by making them relative to the subject and reducing them formally to mere show (*Schein*), or to what Hegel terms *Eitelkeit*, vanity. Instead of disposing and obligating the ego, in irony, substantial interests are disposed by the ego. As Hegel puts it in reference to Ast, in irony "everything is vanity and my vanity alone remains."¹⁵ Such irony is vanity and conceit:

This conceit which understands how to belittle every truth in order to turn back into itself and revel in its own understanding, which knows how to dissolve every thought and always finds the same empty ego instead of any content—this is a satisfaction which we must leave to itself, for it flees the universal and seeks only to be for itself.¹⁶

The ego which ironically negates everything substantial is itself empty and vacuous. For if he succeeds in dissolving all substantial content, then the ironist has none. Irony results in a substanceless subject.¹⁷ This sense of being unbound, loosed from all ties that bind or could bind, may be experienced as liberation. But Hegel believes it is a pseudo-liberation. *Where skepticism proves to be an incapacity for truth, irony proves to be an incapacity for substance and substantial interest.* Instead of seriousness, the ironic self is only capable of jests and play. But this jollity masks an inner vacuity and emptiness that can manifest itself in postures of quasi-mastery:

[the virtuoso ironist] who has reached this standpoint of divine genius looks down from his high rank on all other men, for they are pronounced dull and limited, inasmuch as law, morals etc., still count for them as essential and obligatory. So then the individual who lives in this way as an artist does give himself relations to others: he lives with friends, mistresses etc., but . . . his particular action, as well as [action] to what is absolute and universal, is at the same time null; his attitude to it all is ironical.¹⁸

Such irony supports relations to only insubstantial others. Irony nullifies others in that it treats them as mere qualifications and extensions of subjectivity, i.e., it treats them as if they did not exist in their own right. Irony is deficiently intersubjective, and incapable of reciprocal recognition. There is no more intersubjective solidarity among a coterie of ironists than honesty among a band of thieves.¹⁹

Alternatively, Romantic irony can manifest itself as a longing and yearning for the very substantial content that is negated by the ironic posture. The ego's vaunted artistic creation is only the creation of an empty ideal that expresses not fullness but emptiness. Hence it is accompanied by a longing for what is truly substantial. Schlegel's later conversion to Catholicism, and the "beautiful soul" of Novalis, etc., attest to this vacuity and longing.²⁰ For Hegel these are symptoms of the unstable mood swings of radical irony: from ironic "liberation" in which one believes oneself to be lord and master of every content, to an isolated emptiness that longs and yearns for a substantial content, to a religious conversion and submission to an external authority that supposedly guarantees the presence of whatever is capable of filling the void, the emptiness that the abstract freedom of irony is.

If Hegel is "right" about Schlegel's Romantic irony, is he also right about Socrates and Socratic irony? Obviously, this question cannot be finally answered in a historical sense because the historical Socrates lies beyond the reach of historical scholarship.²¹ Nevertheless, Kierkegaard criticizes Hegel's account of Socrates, and offers a defense of Schlegel's irony as closer to Socrates than Hegel would be prepared to admit.

Kierkegaard on Irony, Socrates, and Hegel

Kierkegaard rejects Hegel's portrait of Socrates because he thinks Hegel fails to do justice to irony as irony. Hegel wants to restrict and tame irony, making it instrumental to something else, namely substantial interests. But this is to present too affirmative a view of irony. Kierkegaard maintains that "By his one-sided attack on the post-Fichtean irony [Hegel] has overlooked the truth of irony. . . ."²² In his dissertation Kierkegaard resurrects and defends Schlegel's Romantic or radical negative irony against Hegel, and tries to show that Socrates is in fact closer to Schlegel than to the traditional view. Before turning to the details, I must observe that Kierkegaard's dissertation, *The Concept of Irony* is a strange book, bordering on incoherence, at once anti-Hegelian and yet apparently Hegelian. In his historical analysis, Kierkegaard makes use of Schlegel's radical or Romantic irony to criticize Hegel's portrait of Socrates. It is as if Schlegel is right about Socrates and Socratic irony, and Hegel, given his antipathy towards Schlegel, failed to appreciate irony in its

hovering between negativity and affirmativity. Thus Hegel fails to get Socrates right. However, in the section "Irony after Fichte," Kierkegaard turns around and criticizes Romantic irony from a Hegelian point of view. He out-Hegels Hegel. All of the above-noted criticisms Hegel brings against irony find their way into this section of Kierkegaard's thesis.²³ This apparent incoherence is no doubt due in part to the fact that his dissertation committee comprised Danish Hegelians, and he felt political-ideological pressure to get the dissertation approved by them. Hence, its apparently Hegelian tilt in the conclusion (that Kierkegaard later repudiated), calling himself a "hegelian fool."²⁴

According to Kierkegaard, Socrates started out attacking the sophists: if they had an answer for everything, Socrates knew nothing at all.²⁵ This negation of the sophists is irony. "But Socrates' irony was not turned against only the sophists; it was turned against the whole established order. He demanded ideality from all of it, and this demand was the judgment that condemned Greek culture. *But his irony was not the instrument he used in the service of the idea; irony was his position—more he did not have.*"²⁶ What Hegel characterizes as Socrates's self-sufficient morality and independence vis-à-vis ancient Greek ethical life, Kierkegaard describes as irony in Schlegel's sense as a negativity that has become universal and is turned against the whole established order. Irony devalues everything else and has no affirmative aspect or thesis. This view is evident in several passages. Consider:

For the ironic subject the given actuality has lost its validity entirely; it has become for him an imperfect form that is a hindrance everywhere. But on the other hand, he does not yet possess the new. He knows only that the present does not match the idea. . . . Here then we have irony as the infinite absolute negativity. It is a negativity because it only negates; it is infinite because does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something which is not yet. The irony establishes nothing. . . . It is a divine madness that rages like a Tamerlane and does not leave one stone upon another.²⁷

Further, commenting on Socratic ignorance, Kierkegaard maintains that

this knowledge [he knows that he knows not] was not a knowledge of something, that is, [it] did not have any positive content, and to that extent his ignorance was ironic. . . . Hegel has tried in vain . . . to reclaim a positive content for him. . . . His irony . . . was complete in itself. Inasmuch then as his ignorance was simultaneously in earnest and not in earnest, it is on this prong that Socrates must be held. To know that one is ignorant is the beginning of coming to know,

but if one does not know more, it is merely a beginning. This knowledge was what kept Socrates ironically afloat.²⁸

Hence, Kierkegaard concludes that Socratic ignorance is irony in the destructive sense because it does not advance any thesis or have any substantial interest.²⁹

There are at least two problems in Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socratic irony. First, the Schlegelian destructive irony that Kierkegaard favors implies that others have only an ambiguous existence. The ironist nullifies others, in the sense that the relationships he establishes with others are one-sided relations absent any reciprocity or give and take. The ironist relates to his insubstantial others in the mode of quasimastery, for they are quasi slaves, not to the ironist, but to outmoded traditions and traditional values. The question is whether this posture and attitude is a plausible picture of Socrates? It does capture Socrates's attitude towards the court at his trial. But it does not accurately depict Socrates's relation toward his students. As Hegel observes, "His irony is not a self-consciousness that he stands above it all, but rather has an innocent end of leading people to the true good, to the universal Idea."³⁰ Not only does this look like a substantial interest on his part, it also embodies a distinctive conception of philosophical discussion. Socrates invites his students to a common search for knowledge. Sophistic discussion aimed simply at a persuasive overthrow of an opponent, but for Socrates dialogue aims at an intersubjectively recognizable truth even if that truth turns out to be otherwise than he would like.³¹

Second, to use Kierkegaard's own terminology, how can Socrates contrast the idea with actuality and demand ideality from actuality, if Socrates does not already in some sense know what the idea is? Kierkegaard acknowledges the problem, but fudges it when he discusses what irony affirms. According to Kierkegaard, irony is not sheer negation; it always has to posit something, but what it posits is nothing; irony grasps the nothing precisely to avoid seriousness. Hence irony is a play with nothing.

It is impossible to be earnest about nothing without either arriving at something (this happens if one becomes speculatively serious about the nothing) or despairing (if one takes the nothing serious personally). But the ironist does neither, and thus we can say that he is not serious about it. . . . Therefore we can say of irony that it is earnestness about nothing. . . . It continually conceives of nothing in contrast to something, and in order to free itself of earnestness about anything, it grasps nothing.³²

Thus irony is not a grasp of the Idea; rather, it grasps the nothing in order not to be serious. This, claims Kierkegaard, is all that Socrates does; he plays with the nothing.

But this answer does not satisfy, because it does not provide any answer to Kierkegaard's own question: How can Socrates know "that the present does not match the idea" if he has no knowledge of the idea? Unless ironic consciousness has some knowledge of the idea, it could not criticize actuality for failing to match it. On the other hand, if, as Kierkegaard believes, all that Socrates affirms is nothing, and seeks to dissolve all actuality and all determinations in the nothing, it is difficult to see how, much less why, Socrates opposed the sophists and their "man the measure." Kierkegaard's interpretation tends to confuse two quite different things: the sophistic view that knowledge is impossible because there are no stable objects to be known, and the Socratic demonstration via irony that what is usually called knowledge is not knowledge at all. The difference is that Socrates assumes that once the debris of confused and misleading ideas (such as sophism) is cleared away, knowledge and virtue will be attainable in principle. In other words, the negations of Socratic irony imply knowledge, knowledge that radical irony denies, but which Hegel, following the more traditional view of Socrates, affirms. However, since Hegel also identifies Socrates with the morality position, and elsewhere criticizes morality as formalism, what does Hegel affirm here?

The Aufhebung of Destructive Irony in Constructive Irony

To clarify the issue, we must differentiate irony from morality within the Socratic-modern position of subjective freedom. The principle of subjective freedom is a critical reflective principle. To assert the right of subjective freedom is to undertake a critique of immediacy and immediate authority, or dogmatism. To the dogmatic mind, something is true and accepted simply because it is. Hegel portrays the manner of acceptance of the customs and institutions of Greek ethical life as immediate, i.e., dogmatic: they are taken to be true simply because they are. However, as Hegel points out, Greek ethical life comes into tragic conflict with itself, first in the tragedy of Antigone, which explored the conflict between family and state power, and secondly in the tragedy of Socrates, a conflict between individual and state.

Socrates asserts the right of subjective freedom. The determinations of right, true, and good are not natural givens; they are rather to be established by and before the critical tribunal of individual subjective freedom and reflection. Thus something, call it X, is not true immediately, or simply because it is, but true only insofar as X maintains itself through a process of

critical reflection. Truth is not a given, but a result of a process of critical analysis. This may provide a clue to understanding Hegel's interpretation of Socratic ignorance. On the one hand, Socratic ignorance is genuine; he has no doctrine of his own and Hegel observes that Socrates does not develop a system of philosophy.³³ On the other hand, Socrates is not a sophist or skeptic. Instead, Socrates engages in a critique of presuppositions and definitions that is carried out on the individual rather than the systematic level. Socrates's aim and fundamental intention are philosophical because the critique of presuppositions and terms is necessary to remove impediments to the communication of knowledge and truth. As Hegel says, "what would make an understanding possible is just the explanation of what is presupposed as known, without actually being so."³⁴ Or, as Hegel expressed it more elegantly in the *Phenomenology*, "the familiar, because it is familiar, is not understood."³⁵ Socrates undertakes the important task of making the familiar seem unfamiliar by means of dialogical irony. However, this is a limited irony that has a pedagogical intent because it is a preparatory step in an open intersubjective inquiry into the true, the right, and the good.

Nevertheless, the critical principle of inquiry implies a temporary suspension of X's validity, a temporary reduction of X from actuality to possibility, during the critical testing process. In this suspension, irony may enter the picture. Hence it becomes important to differentiate irony from morality. One way to differentiate them is to ask whether the process of critical reflection serves a substantial interest? If so, then reflection is limited by that interest, and the substantial interest is only temporarily suspended. It is also reinstated by reflection. On the other hand, the process of reflection itself may be absolutized. Then the self holds itself above all substantial interests, nullifying and suspending them, canceling their immediacy. By playing with the nothing, radical irony tries to make permanent the suspension of substantial interests.

To be sure, the reflective individual may tear himself away from, or suspend, any and all determinations, and in Hegel's account, Socrates does this. He suspends the traditional givens and content of Greek ethical life and refuses to recognize them as legitimate. According to Hegel,

everything which we recognize as right or duty can be shown by thought to be null and void, limited and in no way absolute. Conversely just as subjectivity evaporates every content into itself, it may also in turn develop it out of itself. Everything in the ethical realm is produced by this activity of spirit. On the other hand, this point of view is defective in as much as it is merely abstract. . . . But if I proceed to act and look for principles, I reach out for determinations and there is then a requirement that these should be de-

duced from the concept of the free will. Thus while it is right to evaporate right or duty into subjectivity, it is on the other hand wrong if the abstract foundation is not in turn developed. Only in ages when the actual world is a hollow, spiritless and unsettled existence may the individual be permitted to flee from actuality and retreat into his inner life. Socrates made his appearance at the time when Athenian democracy had fallen into ruin. He evaporated the existing world and retreated into himself in search of the right and the good.³⁶

Socratic ignorance nullifies the merely traditional, but this is not simply ironic play with the nothing. Rather, Socrates's "subjective turn" anticipates the morality position: When the right and the good are no longer embodied in cultural traditions, they must be determined by the individual from himself. However, this critique of traditional substantial interests is not a total rejection, because Socrates still pursues substantial interests, albeit in a different way. To be sure, Socrates lives abstractly, but his abstraction is different from that of the ironist. The ironist plays with the nothing in order not to be serious about anything, but Socrates seriously seeks an abstract good in decadent, parochial times.

For Hegel, Socratic ignorance is not sheer negativity and destructiveness towards actuality, but includes an abstract affirmation of the Good. Socratic ignorance, in short, has "a principle, concrete within itself, which, however is not yet exhibited in its development, and in this abstract attitude we find what is wanting in the Socratic standpoint, of which nothing that is affirmative can, beyond this point, be adduced."³⁷ Socratic ignorance has a substantial interest. However, Socrates does not himself develop this interest. The Socratic position, like the morality position, remains abstract.

How can Hegel consistently claim that Socrates anticipates the morality position, with its ethical formalism and vacuity, and, in opposition to radical or destructive irony, also claim that he is a revered teacher who wishes to lead his students to substantial interests—the idea, the good, the true? Elsewhere Hegel says that morality is so indeterminate and devoid of content that it cannot even support Kant's test of contradiction, because where there is nothing, there can be no contradiction either.³⁸ Having said this, how can Hegel claim that Socratic ignorance has positive significance?

The answer lies in the observation that although irony and morality have a common basis in freedom, they nevertheless are not equivalent. To be sure, there is a formal connection and resemblance between irony and morality. In irony the subject seeks to tear itself away from all determinations. Similarly, the morality position involves a noncoincidence between the "ought" and the "is." The duty that reason enjoins is not derived from

any given, because the “ought” of morality is a law that freedom imposes on itself. The morality position is close to irony in that both posit non-coincidence and conceive autonomous self-determination as having a negative dimension. Nevertheless, for Hegel, the morality position, despite its formalism, is not entirely empty; it has a substantial interest, namely duty. Morality differs from irony in that it has a substantial interest in duty, even though the morality position conceives duty abstractly and as formally indeterminate. The difference between irony and morality is that *in morality the substantial interest in duty is abstract*, whereas in irony the self, having suspended all substantial interests, is itself abstract, formal and empty, a substanceless subject.

Consequently, although he identifies Socrates with the formal morality position, Hegel denies that Socratic irony is Schlegel’s. Socratic irony is not sheer negativity, nor the ultimate perspective to which everything else is relative, but is rather subservient and instrumental to a higher end. Socratic irony is therefore both limited and constructive. It is a determinate negation directed against the Sophists, but not against reason or the Idea. Socrates does not play ironically with the Idea as if he were above it, but intends to lead his students to knowledge of the good and the true. In Hegel’s words:

The irony of Socrates is quite removed from the irony of our times. Irony has for Socrates, as it did for Plato, a restricted significance. Socrates’ determinate irony is more a manner of conversation, a social brilliance, rather than the pure negation and negative procedure of our irony. Socratic irony is not derision nor hypocrisy, it is rather a play with the Idea. . . . His irony is not a self-consciousness that he stands above it all, but rather has an innocent end of leading people to the true good, to the universal Idea.³⁹

Socrates abstracts, not from all substantial interests, but only a spiritless, parochial culture that fails to acknowledge the right of subjective freedom.

In contrast, radical or destructive irony implies the primacy of the subject. Such irony believes that nothing possesses worth except pure freedom itself. Such a self, in remaining above all substantial interests, becomes empty, substanceless. However, a self that plays with the nothing, that recognizes nothing, i.e., no substantial interests, as binding or disposing it, and that needs no recognition, is in danger of pursuing its own interests to the exclusion and detriment of everyone and everything else. A self that reduces or refuses all substantial interests is on the verge not of liberation but of becoming evil. Radical irony and freedom, pursued to the end without any possibility of reversal, are thus self-isolating, self-subverting, and self-corrupting.⁴⁰

In order not to end in such self-subversion, irony, as a negation of immediacy and determinacy, must itself be negated, *aufgehoben*. This means that subjective reflection has to be open to the possibility of a reversal of its apparent primacy. It has to be open to the possibility that what it brings forth from itself is not necessarily subject-relative or derivative, but may have intrinsic being and worth, a worth independent of the self; in short, a substantial interest about which irony must be in earnest. This substantial interest may be recognized and, if and when it is recognized, should limit or control irony by requiring earnestness:

For genuine earnestness enters only by means of a substantial interest, something of intrinsic worth like truth, ethical life, etc.,—by means of a content which counts as such for me as essential, so that I only become essential myself in my own eyes in so far as I have immersed myself in such a content and have brought myself into conformity with it in all my knowing and acting.⁴¹

Hegel describes the *Aufhebung* of irony into morality as follows: “Morality means that the subject in its freedom posits out of itself the determinations of the good, the ethical and what is right, and, since it posits these determinations out of itself, it also suspends this determination of *self*-determination, so that the determinations [themselves] are eternal, and exist in and for themselves.”⁴² Subjective reflection suspends its own centrality vis-à-vis its positings, so that their intrinsic worth and significance (*an und für sich*) are disclosed. In morality, the subject posits an infinite task of which it is not the sole creator. Morality implies and presupposes a reference to and positive recognition of others as ends.⁴³ This recognition cancels the apparent relativity of all determinations to the ego and constitutes the *Aufhebung* of destructive into constructive irony.

Hence, Socratic irony is fundamentally different from Schlegelian. It is not above all determinations as their master, rather it is prepared to find itself at the disposal of what is true and what must be done. As Gregory Vlastos has recently emphasized, Socrates’s ignorance does not mean Socratic uncertainty or a dismissal of truth as unattainable or dispensable:

When told in the *Gorgias* (473b) that it would not be difficult to refute his thesis, Socrates retorts: ‘not difficult, Polus, but impossible, for what is true is never refuted’. . . . [Vlastos continues] By no stretch of the imagination could Plato have put such words into the mouth of someone who is maintaining ‘suspended judgment’, ‘has not made up his mind’, ‘argues against everything and makes no

positive assertions'. No moral philosopher has ever avowed a more positive conviction of the truth of a risky thesis than does Socrates when he argues, for example, that he who wrongs another person always damages his own happiness more than his victim's.⁴⁴

For Hegel, the final constructive Socratic irony is that man is not the measure of all things, and that the measure that is sought in consciousness measures that very consciousness. Further, the liberation that Socrates seeks for himself and for his students is not the self-isolating, empty liberation of radical irony that flees from actuality but remains dependent on what it flees, or that rages until it leaves no substantial stone standing. Irony is neither a skeptical incapacity for truth, nor a Schlegelian incapacity for substantial interests. Irony is a condition of substantial interests, communicative freedom, and free social human life. For Hegel, Socratic irony is instrumental to the idea that human beings desire a genuine, as opposed to a merely apparent good, and that the conditions of achieving such good include truth, not lies, and an inclusive community based on reciprocal recognition that renounces sophistic deception and political coercion so that freedom can become actual. Kierkegaard describes such constructive irony in this way:

No genuinely human life is possible without irony. . . . As soon as irony is controlled (*aufgehoben*) it makes a movement opposite to that in which uncontrolled irony declares its life. Irony limits, finitizes and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality and content. . . . Anyone who does not understand irony . . . lacks the bath of regeneration and rejuvenation . . . that rescues the soul from having its life in finitude. . . .⁴⁵

Of course, this passage is from the last part of Kierkegaard's dissertation and it may well have been meant ironically, i.e., it may have been a mere ploy to facilitate the acceptance of his thesis by a committee of Danish Hegelians.

But perhaps Kierkegaard really meant it, because he later adopts, without acknowledgment, the Hegelian view of constructive irony in his account of the stages or spheres of existence.⁴⁶ In the *Postscript*, he describes irony as the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical sphere of existence.⁴⁷ This is the Hegelian view of constructive irony. "Irony arises from the constant placing of the particularities of the finite together with the infinite ethical requirement, thus permitting the contradiction to come into being."⁴⁸ It is remarkable that Kierkegaard should articulate the Hegelian view of irony in his most anti-Hegelian work. But there is more: Kierkegaard also criticizes his earlier dissertation (*The Concept of Irony*) for "consciously or unconsciously presenting only one side of him [Socrates]."⁴⁹ The portrait of Socrates

as a destructive ironist that Kierkegaard in his dissertation urged against Hegel's Socrates is acknowledged to be a one-sided distortion. Kierkegaard now asserts that Socrates is not a Romantic ironist who plays with the nothing, but an ethicist. An ethicist is more than an ironist because "an ethicist uses irony as his incognito."⁵⁰ This is not only Hegel's view of Socrates, but also his view of irony as controlled by, rather than destructive of, a substantial interest. Thus we have a final irony: in the heart of his most intense opposition to Hegel, Kierkegaard nevertheless articulates Hegel's view that irony, when coupled with and limited by a substantial interest such as the ethical, can, through the *Aufhebung* of substanceless subjectivity, save the ironist from boredom, evil and self-subversion.

Notes

1. Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991); Sarah Kofman, *Socrates: Fictions of a Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998). See also *Socrates: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, 4 Vols. ed. W. Prior (London: Routledge, 1996).

2. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane (London: Routledge, 1963), vol. 1 442–443. Hereafter cited as LHP.

3. Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie, Werke Theorie Werkausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 18: 515. Hereafter cited as VGP, followed by volume number and page number.

4. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, ed. & trans. H. & E. Hong (Princeton: University Press, 1989). Hereafter cited as CI.

5. CI, 265.

6. Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel* (New York: Twayne, 1970), 70.

7. Friedrich Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment #131; cited in Eichner, op. cit., 71.

8. Schlegel, Lyceum Fragment #42, in *Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde" and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971) 148.

9. Schlegel, Lyceum Fragment #108, *ibid.* 156.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment #116, *ibid.*, 175.

12. Hegel points this out in LHP, 3: 507.

13. Hegel, *Asthetik, Werke Theorie Werkausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 13: 94.

14. Judith Norman claims that Hegel misunderstands Schlegel and the above difference goes to the heart of Hegel's misunderstanding. ["Squaring the Romantic Circle: Hegel's Critique of Schlegel's Theories of Art," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. W. Maker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 141] Hegel takes Schlegel's irony to be an attitude of the subject towards an illusory object, whereas for Schlegel

irony involves the grasp of one's own limitations vis-à-vis the object, namely, that one falls short of one's goals and ideals. Norman's attempt to defend Schlegel against Hegel turns on a distinction between two claims Hegel attributes to Schlegel: (1) that artistic genius is the absolute ego and (2) that irony is the attitude of the genius towards the world that it knows to be its own product. The former Norman says is false, while the latter is true. But this is a distinction without a difference. For even if Schlegel believes that the ironic self is not unlimited, if one asks what is the justification of the claim that the self is limited, one is led back to the subject that posits all determinations and limits. All limitation is self-limitation. This is Hegel's point about Schlegel's derivation from Fichte, that everything in the ego is posited by the ego, that all apparent limitation by other is self-limitation, so the ego remains lord and master over all its content and determinations.

15. VGP, 18: 461.

16. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 69–70.

17. For this formulation, see Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, (München: Fink Verlag, 1998), 45ff.

18. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) vol. I, 66.

19. See Kierkegaard, *CI*, 249.

20. *LHP*, 3: 508.

21. For a maximalist view of Socrates, see Gregory Vlastos, "Socrates" in *Socrates: Critical Assessments*, vol. I, ed. W. Pryor. (London: Routledge, 1996), 136–155. For a minimalist critique of Vlastos, see Charles Kahn, "Vlastos's Socrates," *ibid.* 156–178.

22. *CI*, 265.

23. Kierkegaard observes that since the ironist plays with nothing, his freedom is only the hollow freedom of the void. He leads an empty ahistorical life. He ironizes everything, including himself. But when he ironizes himself, he deprives himself of substantial content or importance; he has no *an sich* of his own (*CI*, 281). But without substantial interests, he becomes bored: "... as he lives in a totally hypothetical and subjunctive way, his life loses all continuity. He succumbs completely to mood. His life is nothing but moods" (284). Consequently his life lacks stability and continuity. At times he is a god, at times a mere grain of sand (284). "Boredom is the only continuity the ironist has. Boredom, this eternity devoid of content, this salvation devoid of joy, this superficial profundity" (285). Thus the ironist lives not above morality and ethics, but lives too abstractly and esthetically. "For him life is a drama and what absorbs him is the ingenious contemplation of this drama. He himself is a spectator, even when he himself is acting. . . . He is inspired by self-sacrificing virtue the way a spectator is inspired in a theater . . . he himself repents, but he repents esthetically not ethically. In the moment of repentance, he is outside and above his repentance, testing to see whether it is poetically appropriate, whether it could do as a line in the mouth of a poetic character" (283–284). Finally, irony is a process of isolation. It does not wish to be generally understood. It is "only an inconsistency that irony has in common with every negative position that irony,

which is isolation according to its concept, seeks to form a society, and, when it cannot elevate itself to the idea of community, tries to actualize itself in conventicles. This is why there is just as little social unity in a coterie of ironists as there is real honesty in a band of thieves" (249). Thus Kierkegaard confirms Hegel's critique of irony—at least in this section of his thesis.

24. CI, 453. Still another hypothesis is that *The Concept of Irony* anticipates the strategy of Either/Or, which presents an esthetic point of view in the first part, the diary of the seducer, and then presents a hegelian ethical point of view on marriage in part two. The dissertation may have a similar structure. No wonder the committee was more than a little baffled by the dissertation. They were put in a position similar to the readers of Either/Or. They "resolved"—or rather ducked—the hermeneutical problem by passing the dissertation.

25. Ibid., 210.

26. Ibid., 214. My emphasis. Part of Kierkegaard's case lies in his analysis of Socrates' refusal to propose an alternative punishment after being found guilty: "He is pronounced guilty by the state. Now the question is what punishment he has deserved. Since Socrates however feels that his life is utterly incomprehensible to the state, it is apparent that he could just as well deserve a reward. He proposes that he be maintained at public expense. . . . To avoid the death sentence insisted upon by Meletus, he could choose a fine or exile. But he is unable to make a choice, for what could prompt him to choose one of these two? Fear of death? That would be unreasonable, for he in fact does not know whether death is a good or an evil. . . . [H]e cannot choose a fine or exile. Why? because they would bring suffering upon him, but he cannot accept that because it is undeserved. . . . [as to] what punishment he deserves . . . his answer is: that which is no punishment, that is, either death, since no one knows whether it is a good or an evil, or a fine, provided that they can be satisfied with an amount he can afford to pay, since money has no value for him. But as for a more specialized punishment, a punishment that would be felt by him, he finds that every such punishment is inappropriate. . . . [Kierkegaard concludes] we find a consistently sustained irony that lets the objective power of the state break up on the rock-firm negativity of irony. The objective power of the state . . . everything loses its absolute validity for him" (CI, 195–196).

27. CI, 261.

28. CI, 269.

29. CI, 269.

30. VGP, 18: 461.

31. See W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1969) vol. 3, 449.

32. CI, 270.

33. LHP, 2: 393, 399.

34. VGP, 18: 459; ET 2: 400.

35. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, op. cit., 28: *Das bekannt überhaupt ist darum weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt.*

36. *Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. Nisbet (Cambridge University Press, 1990) §138 Zusatz. Hereafter PR.

37. LHP, 1: 407.

38. PR, §135 Zusatz: “if we demand of a principle that it should also be able to serve as the determinant of universal legislation, this presupposes that it already has a content; and if this content were present, it would be easy to apply the principle. But in this case [namely the morality position], the principle itself is not yet available, and the criterion that there should be no contradiction is non-productive—for where there is nothing, there can be no contradiction either.”

39. VGP, 18: 461.

40. This is Hegel’s verdict on Schlegel in the *Philosophy of Right* (§140) and *Phenomenology*: conscience is self-subverting and becomes evil. The “liberation” of radical irony is pure isolation, emptiness, and vacuity, that turns into a longing for the very substantiality that it rejects. See also E. Hirsch, “Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,” in *Materialien zu Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. H. F. Fulda u. D. Henrich (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979), 245–275.

41. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, op. cit., 65.

42. VGP, 18: 445; italics mine. Kierkegaard also notices this when he writes: “As soon as irony is controlled, it makes a movement *opposite* to that in which uncontrolled irony declares its life. Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content. . . .” CI, 326. My emphasis.

43. *Philosophy of Right*, §112.

44. Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates*, op. cit., 4–5.

45. Kierkegaard, CI, 326.

46. Thus Kierkegaard established a pattern for many of Hegel’s critics, namely, their criticisms mask their unacknowledged borrowing from and indebtedness to Hegel. For a study of Hegelian conceptualities in Kierkegaard’s account of the stages of existence, see Stephen Dunning, *Kierkegaard’s Dialectic of Inwardness: A Structural Analysis of the Theory of Stages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

47. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 448.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 449.

50. Ibid.

Chapter 5

Ancient Skepticism and Systematic Philosophy



Will Dudley

Hegel's interest in skepticism is evident throughout his philosophical career. In an important early essay, in the *Phenomenology*, and most especially in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he provides detailed analyses of the ancient Academics, the Pyrrhonists, and the modern skeptics from Descartes to his own time.¹ But despite his prolonged and serious engagement with the subject, Hegel's work has gone largely unnoticed in contemporary treatments of skepticism. Moreover, to the extent that Hegel's work on skepticism has been discussed, the standard interpretation is incomplete and not entirely accurate. Specifically, although Hegel's judgment that the skepticism of the ancients was superior to that of the moderns has been rightly emphasized, little attention has been paid to Hegel's analysis of the different traditions *within* ancient skepticism. A significant consequence of this omission has been the mistaken conclusion that Hegel's preference for the skepticism of the ancients is based on an admiration for their dialectical method. This misunderstanding of *what* Hegel values about ancient skepticism has had the further consequence of making it difficult to explain *why* he values it. That is, the emphasis on method has made it difficult to make sense of Hegel's claim that skepticism is an essential element of philosophical science.

In this paper I will do three things. First, I will provide a brief account of the contemporary reception of Hegel's treatment of skepticism. Second, I will revisit in some detail Hegel's analysis of the ancient skeptics, in order to develop a better understanding of that in which Hegel locates their superiority to the moderns. And third, I will conclude the paper by indicating how this understanding illuminates the relationship of skepticism to systematic philosophy as Hegel conceives it.

The Contemporary Reception of Hegel's Treatment of Skepticism

There are at least two reasons for the widespread neglect of Hegel in contemporary discussions of skepticism. First and foremost, contemporary discussions of skepticism are oriented almost exclusively toward the problems made canonical by Descartes and Hume, and most especially toward the problem of knowledge of the external world. Indeed, Barry Stroud's influential book, the title of which, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, suggests broad concerns, asserts in its second sentence that "the problem is to show how we can have any knowledge of the world at all."² Stroud treats this problem exhaustively, but also exclusively; he never considers that "the significance of philosophical scepticism" might exceed its bounds.³ Hegel, who famously considers modern skepticism much less interesting and important than that of the ancients, is therefore not surprisingly neglected by those, like Stroud, who consider skepticism to have begun with Descartes. Second, even those contemporary authors who *are* interested in and highly knowledgeable about ancient skepticism, including M. F. Burnyeat, Michael Frede, and Michael Williams, tend to belong to the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, and therefore to be unfamiliar with Hegel. Hegel is simply not someone to whom they are accustomed to turn for helpful insights on their own problems.

Of course, the neglect of Hegel's work on skepticism has not been universal. Kenneth Westphal has demonstrated the importance of Sextus Empiricus for the *Phenomenology*, and provided an account of Hegel's response to Pyrrhonian skepticism.⁴ Michael Baur has traced the role of skepticism in the emergence and development of German Idealism from Kant to Hegel.⁵ And Michael Forster and Robert Williams have focused, as I will in this paper, on Hegel's distinction between ancient and modern skepticism, and on his judgment that the skepticism of the ancients is superior.⁶

Forster and Williams agree that ancient skepticism is defined by its employment of a dialectical method.⁷ They further agree that Hegel locates the superiority of the ancients in this method. Forster writes that in Hegel's view:

The great merit of ancient skepticism lies in its possession of a general method: the method of setting into opposition equally strong propositions or arguments on both sides of any issue which arises and thereby producing an equal balance of justification on both sides of the issue. This is the method of "equipollence" (*isostheneia*, or "equal force on both sides").⁸

Williams concurs, claiming that:

According to Hegel, the superiority of ancient to modern skepticism is evident in the fact that it has a method, originally formulated as a set of tropes or “turns.” This method of equipollence, that pits positions of equal weight and validity against each other, is supposed to make a beginning in knowledge and philosophy all but impossible.⁹

Forster and Williams reach this conclusion, however, without devoting sufficient attention to the different strains Hegel identifies *within* ancient skepticism: the Academic and the Pyrrhonian. The obvious reason for not spending much time disentangling Hegel’s thoughts on these two ancient traditions is that he ultimately concludes their brands of skepticism are essentially the same, so it might appear fruitless to pursue his consideration of each individually. But this turns out to be far from the case. Hegel’s view that the Academics and the Pyrrhonists are essentially the same is highly unusual, and in learning *why* he thinks they are the same (even if he is wrong) we can learn much about what he values in ancient skepticism, which in turn will teach us more about how he understands the role of skepticism in philosophical science.¹⁰ In particular, attending to Hegel’s discussion of the variations within ancient skepticism will show that, *pace* Forster and Williams, Hegel does not consider equipollence to be the most advanced skeptical method, and in fact does not base his judgment of the superiority of ancient skepticism on methodological considerations at all. Such considerations cannot serve as the basis of Hegel’s judgment because, as we will see, the different strands of ancient skepticism he admires share no common method. What they do share is a common form of skeptical *consciousness*, and it is therefore this consciousness, rather than the method of equipollence, that makes an essential contribution to Hegel’s systematic philosophy.

Hegel’s Analysis of Ancient Skepticism

Hegel’s history of Greek philosophy is divided into three sections, the second of which is entitled “Dogmatism and Skepticism.”¹¹ This section is further divided into four sub-sections, devoted to the Stoics, Epicureans, New Academics, and Skeptics. By “Skeptics” and “Skepticism” (with a capital ‘S’) Hegel explicitly means Pyrrho and his intellectual heirs, the Pyrrhonists. However, as we shall see, he also considers the New Academics to be representatives of “skepticism” (with a small ‘s’), as opposed to the “dogmatism” of the Stoics and the Epicureans.

In his discussion of the Pyrrhonists, Hegel notes that “the distinction between the Academy and Skepticism was a matter as to which the Skeptics exercised themselves much.”¹² However, Hegel is convinced that this exercise comes to nothing. He writes at the beginning of his discussion of the Academics that the distinction drawn by the Pyrrhonists “is certainly very formal, and has but little signification,” and that it “often consists in the meanings of words only.”¹³ Elaborating, he says that “the distinction [between Skepticism and] the New Academy lies only in the form of expression. . . . It is founded only on the mania of the Skeptics to cut off and to avoid every kind of assertive (i.e., dogmatic) expression.”¹⁴ Hegel thus finds the Academics and the Pyrrhonists equally skeptical, despite the Pyrrhonists’ protestations to the contrary. To understand why this is so, we need to look carefully at what he has to say about both traditions. With Hegel, we will consider the Academics first.

Hegel treats two Academics in detail, Arcesilaus and Carneades. In presenting these two thinkers, and the Pyrrhonists to come, Hegel considers their method, their theoretical results, and their practical results.¹⁵

Arcesilaus is distinguished from Carneades, according to Hegel, by his use of a nondialectical method. The dialectical method of Carneades involves opposing the positive assertions of the dogmatists with specific counter-assertions: if the dogmatist claims the world is blue, Carneades produces an equally compelling counter-claim that the world is not-blue. If successful, this dialectical method leaves the dogmatist (and the skeptic) unable to decide between the competing claims, thus inducing *epoché*, or the suspension of judgment. This balancing of equally persuasive assertions against each other is the method of equipollence, which we have seen both Williams and Forster identify not only as *the* method of ancient skepticism, but also as the source of its superiority to the skepticism of the moderns.

In Arcesilaus, however, Hegel writes that “the opposition to the Dogmatists . . . does not . . . proceed from the dialectic of the Skeptics, but from keeping to abstraction.”¹⁶ Hegel does not elaborate on “keeping to abstraction,” but presumably he means that rather than oppose *specific* claims of the dogmatists with equally specific counter-claims, Arcesilaus attempts to cast *general* doubt on the whole field of claims the dogmatist might make. Arcesilaus’s response to the claim that the world is blue would be to provide an argument assailing the dogmatist’s grounds for asserting the world to be any color (or to be the bearer of any other predicates, for that matter); rather than engage the dogmatist’s claim directly, as Carneades does, Arcesilaus *abstracts* from the specific claim and discredits the dogmatist’s whole enterprise of claim making. Hegel does not provide any detail as to what Arcesilaus’s abstract argument against dogmatism was. But for our purposes, it is not even important whether Arcesilaus actually had a powerful abstract skeptical

argument. More important is Hegel's distinction between abstract and dialectical skepticism, and the fact that he makes use of this distinction not only to distinguish the ancients from the moderns, but also to distinguish the different strains of ancient skepticism from each other.

Arcesilaus' abstract skeptical method has two theoretical results, which combine to produce *epoché*, the suspension of judgment also achieved by Carneades and the Pyrrhonists.¹⁷ The first of these is the recognition that, as Hegel puts it, in "taking up [content into thought] no truth comes to pass, but only phenomenon (*Erscheinung*), not fact as being (*Tatsache als Sein*)."¹⁸ Hegel likens this recognition to that achieved and emphasized by much of modern philosophy:

Arcesilaus here makes the same celebrated distinction that in modern times has again been brought forward with such great importance as the opposition between thought and being, ideality and reality, subjective and objective. Things are something different from me. How can I attain to things? Thought is the independent determination of a content as universal; but a given content is an individual, to which one cannot assent. The one is here, the other there—subjective and objective cannot attain to each other. On this point the whole culture of modern philosophy has turned for a long time.¹⁹

Arcesilaus's second theoretical result is the awareness that not only are subject and object separated by the gulf between thinking and being, but the subject's very thoughts are themselves unstable. Arcesilaus says (according to Sextus Empiricus, from whom Hegel gets much of his information on the ancients) that "there is no conceptualized representation (*begriffene Vorstellung*) that is not false." On this basis, Hegel credits him with the discovery that "all determinate content has its opposite in another determinate content, which must, as something thought, likewise be true," and proclaims that "this is a great consciousness that Arcesilaus attained."²⁰

Arcesilaus's theoretical results suggest that it is wise to refrain from assenting to any positive assertions; unable to know the truth, we should suspend judgment. Practically, however, as Hegel quotes Arcesilaus: "the regulation of action is not possible without a determination of something as true or false."²¹ Consequently, Arcesilaus reportedly continues: "whoever withholds his assent will, with respect to what is to be done and to be left undone, direct himself according to the probable (*Wahrscheinlichen*), that which has a good ground (*eulogon*)." In Arcesilaus, then, skeptical consciousness and theoretical *epoché* are supplemented by the practical recommendation to live one's life according to what is probable.

Carneades, on Hegel's account, distances himself from Arcesilaus in two respects. The first, as we have already seen, is his choice of method: Carneades is a dialectical skeptic. Hegel takes as evidence of this his famous trip to Rome, on which he is said to have given successive speeches, one in defense of justice, the other against it. According to legend, his skill as an orator was such that the speeches were equally persuasive, leaving his audience perplexed as to the truth.²²

Carneades is further distinguished from Arcesilaus, according to Hegel, by his disdain for according "probable" status to claims that are backed by "good reasons." Carneades holds that the result of successful dialectical skepticism is a demonstration that the good reasons for one claim can always be counterbalanced by equally good reasons for an opposing claim. This amounts to a denial that we have "good reasons" for believing either claim; neither can be considered more probable than the other.²³

Hegel insists, however, that these differences between Arcesilaus and Carneades are much less important than their similarities. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that the distinction often drawn between the Middle Academy and the New Academy, founded by Arcesilaus and Carneades respectively, is "a distinction that signifies nothing."²⁴ Hegel makes this claim because Arcesilaus and Carneades, *despite* their very different methods, arrive at the same theoretical and practical results.

Of the theoretical results of Carneades, Hegel writes:

His principal thought is that every criterion [of the truth] must be constituted so that it has two elements: one is the objective, existent, immediately determined, and the other is an affection, an activity, a determination of consciousness, belonging to the feeling, representing or thinking subject. But such a thing could not be a criterion [of the truth]. For the activity of consciousness consists in changing the objective, and thus does not allow the objective as it is to come to us immediately.²⁵

Consequently, we cannot judge or claim the contents of our consciousness to be true, for, as Hegel characterizes the position of Carneades, "the judgment concerning the agreement [of a representation and an object] is most certainly not in a position to distinguish the matter itself from the matter as represented."²⁶ In other words, like Arcesilaus before him, Carneades achieves the insight, emphasized by modern skeptics, that we cannot know things except as we represent them, and since we cannot filter out the effect of our act of representation on our knowledge, we simply cannot know things as they are in themselves.

But also like Arcesilaus before him, Carneades achieves the further insight, which the moderns miss, that the contents of consciousness are themselves unstable. Hegel writes that “we see in Carneades (in contradistinction to those who place truth in what is immediate, and especially in modern times in intuition) that the certainty of immediate knowledge, whether internal revelation or external perception, rightly takes the lowest rank.”²⁷

In addition, Arcesilaus and Carneades arrive at the same practical results. Since they share the same twofold skeptical consciousness, both advocate the suspension of judgment in theoretical matters. Furthermore, Carneades argues that in the face of such *epoché* the skeptic should act on what he calls “convincing conceptions,” even though he abandons the view of Arcesilaus that we have good reasons to think the conceptions that convince us are more probable than others.²⁸ According to Hegel, Carneades holds that “criteria are to be sought and maintained for the conduct of *life* and the acquisition of *happiness*, but not for the speculative consideration of what is in and for itself.”²⁹ That is, criteria for action are to be maintained for psychological rather than theoretical reasons; we simply cannot get along without them.

Hegel concludes his discussion of the Academics with the following distillation: The Academic principle limits itself to convincing representations; it is concerned with the subjectivity of representations. . . . Driven to its ultimate limit, it amounts to this, that absolutely *everything is for consciousness*, and also that the form of a being in general, as form, completely vanishes. . . . The Academy . . . has hereby really passed over into Skepticism.³⁰

In other words, the essence of the Academic standpoint, and that which makes it a genuinely skeptical standpoint in Hegel’s view, is the two-fold theoretical consciousness shared by Arcesilaus and Carneades. Academic skepticism is aware, first, of the difference between and interdependence of the representing subject and the represented object, and, second, of the instability of the subject’s representations themselves. It is important to note that Academic skepticism has no common method: the same results are available via both abstraction and dialectic. With this summary in mind, we can now turn to Hegel’s investigation of the Pyrrhonists.

Hegel understands Pyrrhonian skepticism to display progress and improvement over time, which he thinks can be seen by comparing the two different groups of skeptical modes or tropes that Sextus Empiricus presents in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.³¹ Hegel argues that the first group, which

includes ten modes, is manifestly inferior to the second, which includes only five, and that the latter must certainly be a development from, and improvement upon, the former.³² We will consider his arguments for this shortly, but first I will present what he thinks the Pyrrhonian tradition has in common throughout its development.

Unlike Academic skepticism, Pyrrhonism is marked by a method common to its early and its late adherents: Pyrrhonism always proceeds dialectically. Hegel writes that “just as the material or content comes up before it, it demonstrates that it is implicitly negative.”³³ The Pyrrhonian skeptic does not rely on an abstract argument against the possibility of knowledge, but instead undermines every particular truth claim with which he is confronted.

Early and late Pyrrhonism also share the same theoretical results. In the first place, “[s]kepticism completed the view that all knowledge is subjective, and with respect to knowledge universally substituted the expression *appearance* (*Scheinen*) for being.”³⁴ Moreover, Pyrrhonian Skepticism also involves “the demonstration that everything determinate and finite is something unstable (*ein Wankendes*). . . . It is directed against the thinking of the understanding, which lets determinate differences stand as ultimate and existent.”³⁵

The Pyrrhonian dialectician reaches the latter conclusion, that “everything that is determinate and finite is unstable,” over time, inductively, as he realizes that he has been able to demonstrate the instability of every assertion he ever has encountered, and becomes convinced of the demonstrable instability of every assertion he ever *will* encounter. Because he does not attempt to prove this by means of an abstract argument, the Pyrrhonian skeptic does not make a universal *claim* about the instability of assertions and the distinctions upon which they rely; rather, he develops an awareness or consciousness of it:

By Skepticism is to be understood a *cultivated* consciousness, for which in some measure not only sensible being, but also being as thought is not held to be true; and which thus knows consciously how to give an account of the nothingness of that which is asserted to be true and real; and which finally, in a general way, annuls not only this and that content of sensation or thought, but is developed to recognize in everything its untruth.³⁶

Hegel thus characterizes Pyrrhonian skepticism by the same twofold consciousness he attributes to Arcesilaus and Carneades: on the one hand, the Pyrrhonist is aware that all access to objects is representational, and that all such representation is mediated by the activity of the subject; and on the other, he is aware that all of the determinations the subject uses to represent and make assertions about objects are themselves unstable.³⁷

Finally, early and late Pyrrhonists share the same practical results as well, which are also the results of the Academics: *epoché*, and a life guided “in an undogmatic way by following the laws, customs, and natural affections.”³⁸ For the Pyrrhonists, as for Carneades, these guiding factors are not believed to possess even probable truth, but are acted upon because we have to act, and because they are the influences we find naturally, habitually, or psychologically compelling.³⁹

Despite these consistent fundamentals, Hegel sees two important developments in the course of Pyrrhonism. The first of these is an increase in the scope of material open to skeptical attack. Hegel understands the early modes as being directed against the sense-certainty of ordinary consciousness, against the everyday belief in the truth of immediate perception. These ten modes “proceed directly against empiricism. Something is given out as being true on the basis of immediate certainty; the opposite of this is demonstrated to be equally certain, and thus the something’s other to be equally valid.”⁴⁰ For example, if it is asserted that honey is sweet, the skeptic might adduce another witness (probably jaundiced) who avers that to him honey is bitter. Thrown into doubt is the empirical character of honey. The later modes, however, go even farther. These five call into question not only the sensory qualities of things, but also “proceed against reflection, against a consciousness related to the developed understanding, against scientific categories—[in short], against the thinking of the sensible, against the determination of the sensible through concepts.”⁴¹ The five later modes, that is, represent a deepening of the skeptic’s awareness of the instability of the contents of subjectivity.

The second, and related, development from early to late Pyrrhonism is the ability to abstract from the particular tools of the various modes and to recognize their commonality. Hegel writes that:

In the older tropes we see the lack of abstraction, the incapacity to grasp their diversity under more simple general points of view; [although] they all converge . . . into some necessary simple determinations. . . . From these tropes the insecurity of immediate knowledge ought to be shown. [They all] relate to the insecurity of that of which we say “it is.”⁴²

Hegel notes that Sextus, a late Pyrrhonist, recognizes some level of commonality in the earlier modes, as he classifies them into three groups: those that create doubt by reflecting on the status of the subject; those that do so by reflecting on status of the object; and those that do so by reflecting on the relation between the two. But Hegel thinks the commonality holds at an even more abstract level: all ten modes, he claims, can be reduced to the

eighth; all ten are different ways of presenting the idea that all things are relative.⁴³ As Hegel puts it, each of the ten modes is a particular way of making the general point that:

What is in relation to another is on the one hand independent, but on the other hand, because it is in relationship, it is also not independent. If something is only in relation to another, then the other belongs to it, and the first thing is thus not independent. But if its other already belongs to it, then its not-being also already belongs to it, and it is a contradiction, and even is not, without its other.⁴⁴

In other words, as Sextus says in his discussion of the eighth mode: “because we cannot separate that which is relative from its other, we also do not know what it is on its own account and according to its nature.”⁴⁵

The five modes (exclusive of the first—that of the undecidable diversity of opinions—with which Hegel is unimpressed) demonstrate, Hegel thinks, a much more developed awareness of their own high level of abstraction and broad scope of application. The third mode is again that of relativity, which, as we have just seen, Hegel thinks is the key to the modes generally. The second, fourth, and fifth modes show how this relativity can be demonstrated in the case of every assertion that has been, or could possibly be, put forward.⁴⁶ They encompass what has been called Agrippa’s trilemma: when an assertion is made, together with a supporting reason, three things can occur when the skeptic brings a challenge. Either the dogmatist supports the first reason with a second, which is in turn challenged, which leads to a third reason to support the second, which is challenged, and so on, (the second mode); or, at some point the purveyor of the assertion wearies and gives up, resting his assertion on the last reason he has given, for which he offers no further support (the fourth mode); or, the chain of reasoning eventually refers back to some reason already given, thus locking itself into a circle (the fifth mode). In all three cases, the assertion founders, its aspirations to knowledge squelched with its inevitably failed justification. On this trilemma, skepticism can hang any proposition a dogmatist could possibly assert.

This shows, Hegel thinks, that even though both the early and the late Pyrrhonists proceed dialectically, the late Pyrrhonists employ dialectic with a difference. The early Pyrrhonists practice the method of equipollence: they meet whatever particular assertion they happen to encounter with a specific counterassertion or mode suitable to producing *epoché* in that instance. Not so with the late Pyrrhonists, who meet every assertion they encounter with Agrippa’s trilemma, showing that: “Skepticism is not really a reasoning against something on the basis of reasons . . . that quick-wittedness discovers in the

particular object, but rather modes, a consciousness of the categories—a high consciousness.”⁴⁷

In other words, the mature skepticism of late Pyrrhonism is not an art of balancing specific, equally plausible assertions and arguments against one another. Rather, it is a self-conscious and highly general demonstration of the conundrums into which the reasoning of the understanding must deteriorate.⁴⁸ Reiterating, Hegel writes that:

Skepticism does not operate by bringing forward what is called a difficulty, a possibility of thinking or representing the matter otherwise, some accident that contingently happens to oppose this asserted knowledge. It is not an empirical activity, but rather a scientific one. These [five] tropes are concerned with the concept, with the essence of determinacy itself, and are exhaustive against the determinate. . . . These tropes are necessary oppositions into which the understanding falls.⁴⁹

We can now assess the similarities between Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism that lead Hegel to conclude, quite notably, that the two are essentially the same. Both discover the inescapable relativity of known objects to knowing subjects, and the instability of the categories with which such subjects attempt to know. That is, both arrive at the twofold skeptical consciousness described above. Both thus aim at the suspension of judgment in theoretical matters, while leaving the practical conduct of ordinary life unscathed, to be governed by admittedly unjustified habits, customs, and inclinations.

It is important to note that Hegel's judgment that the two traditions are equally skeptical is not affected by the fact that they share no common method. Of the four skeptical positions we have considered (those of Arcesilaus, Carneades, the early Pyrrhonists, and the late Pyrrhonists), three are dialectical and one is abstract. Furthermore, among the dialectical skeptics only two (Carneades and the early Pyrrhonists) employ the method of equipollence.

We have just seen that Hegel does not prefer the skepticism of the ancients who practice equipollence to that of the others. On the contrary, Hegel is more impressed by the late Pyrrhonists than by either their predecessors or Carneades, precisely because the Agrippan dialectic is generalized rather than equipollent. Moreover, since there is *no* single method common to the four ancient positions Hegel considers equally skeptical, we can safely conclude that his preference for ancient skepticism over modern is not based on methodological considerations at all. For Hegel the methods of skepticism

are not ends in themselves, but *methods*; they are *means* of arriving at skeptical results. The fact that some of the Academic and Pyrrhonian skeptics employ equipollent dialectic is interesting, but relevant only to the degree that it bears on their ability to attain the same twofold theoretical consciousness as their nonequipollent counterparts.

The basis of Hegel's disdain for modern skepticism can now be made clear. It lies not in the lack of a dialectical method, but in the lack of the second aspect of the ancient skeptical consciousness. Modern skepticism doubts our ability to connect the subjective contents of consciousness to objects in the world, but never doubts the stability of the contents of consciousness themselves. The former doubt is important and necessary—as Hegel notes, the unity of thought and being cannot simply be assumed, as it was by the Stoics.⁵⁰ But by itself this type of doubt is insufficient; it constitutes only the first aspect of a truly skeptical consciousness.

Modern skepticism is thus primarily skepticism about our powers of inference, about our ability to move from subjective evidence (like so-called facts of consciousness) to conclusions about the objective world.⁵¹ But it never doubts that such “facts of consciousness” are indeed facts. As Hegel puts it, modern skepticism “assumes that what is in our immediate consciousness, everything sensible, is something true.”⁵² By contrast, ancient skepticism “is founded on a developed and thought out annihilation [*Zunichthemachung*] of everything held to be true and existent, so that everything is made unstable.”⁵³ This instability extends, as we saw in Hegel's discussion of the five modes of late Pyrrhonism, to the very categories with which we think.

Hegel sums up the difference between the ancients and the moderns in both the “Skepticism” essay and the *Lectures*. In the earlier piece, he writes:

There emerges from this consideration of the different aspects of ancient skepticism, the distinguishing mark and essence of our most recent skepticism. To begin with, this modern skepticism lacks the noblest side of [early ancient] skepticism, its orientation against the dogmatism of ordinary consciousness. . . . Furthermore, . . . this latest skepticism . . . lacks also the noblest side of the later ancient skepticism, i.e., its orientation against limited cognition, against finite knowledge.⁵⁴

In the *Lectures*, he adds:

[The Ancient] skeptics go further than the adherents of the more modern, purely formal idealism; the ancients are concerned with content, and show that all content, whether sensed or thought, has

something opposed to it. They show the contradiction *in the content itself*, and thus show that for everything brought forth the opposite is also valid; this is the objective element manifested in [ancient] skepticism, but not in [modern] subjective idealism.⁵⁵

The conclusion Hegel draws from all this is that modern skepticism “is the most wanton dogmatism of all, because it maintains that the ‘I’, the unity of self-consciousness, is opposed to being, is in and for itself . . . and that the two therefore absolutely cannot come together.”⁵⁶ Modern skepticism is thus a philosophical standpoint with which “for crudity of understanding and falsehood [ancient skepticism] cannot compare.”⁵⁷

Skepticism and Systematic Philosophy

Finally, we are in a position to consider the relationship of ancient skepticism to systematic philosophy. At the beginning of the *Encyclopedia*, in the course of his attempt to provide a “precise conception” of the philosophical enterprise he is about to undertake, Hegel identifies three moments that together comprise logical thinking.⁵⁸ The first of these is the moment of abstraction, or the moment of the understanding. The second is the dialectical or skeptical moment. And the third is the speculative or rational moment. He thus claims that “philosophy . . . contains the skeptical as a moment within itself.”⁵⁹

This claim is difficult to understand if “the skeptical” is taken, as it is by Forster and Williams, to indicate the method practiced by some of the ancients. On this view, Hegel’s claim must mean that systematic philosophy itself employs the dialectical method of equipollence. As Williams writes: “For Hegel . . . speculative reason . . . incorporates the skeptical tropes.”⁶⁰

But the *Logic* manifestly does not develop by producing pairs of opposed yet equally compelling assertions, and Hegel explicitly disavows any suggestion that it does. Immediately after claiming that philosophy contains a skeptical or dialectical moment, he takes great pains to explain how “dialectic” should and should not be understood:

[By] dialectic is often [meant] no more than a subjective seesaw of arguments that sway back and forth, where basic import is lacking and the nakedness is covered by the astuteness that gives birth to such argumentations. . . . [But] dialectic is not to be confused with mere *sophistry*, whose essence consists precisely in making one-sided and abstract determinations valid in their isolation, each on its own

account, in accord with the individual's interest of the moment and his particular situation. . . . Dialectic diverges essentially from that procedure, since it is concerned precisely with considering things in and for themselves, so that the finitude of the one-sided determinations of the understanding becomes evident.⁶¹

In other words, the dialectical moment of the logical thinking that lies at the heart of systematic philosophy cannot be construed as the employment of the method of equipollence.

Perhaps for this reason, Forster and Williams focus their efforts to locate a role for ancient skepticism within Hegel's philosophy not on the *Logic*, but on the *Phenomenology*. Both are successful in finding one there, because the *Phenomenology* does reprise ancient skepticism's attack on the dogmatisms that persist within modern philosophy, and even within what the moderns call "skepticism." Hegel makes the affinity between his *Phenomenology* and the skepticism of the ancients obvious in his *Lectures*, where he says: "In a general sense, skepticism is the view that things are alterable; things are, but their being is not true, for it likewise involves their not-being. For example, this day is 'today', but tomorrow is also 'today', and so on; 'now' it is day, but night is also 'now', and so on."⁶² These examples are familiar—for of course they are precisely the ones Hegel uses in the famous opening chapter of the *Phenomenology*. Thus two of the insights of ancient skepticism—that neither the immediate coincidence of subject and object, nor the adequacy of ordinary consciousness for bringing about that coincidence, may be dogmatically assumed—bring us into and part of the way through the *Phenomenology*, and in so doing set us on the road to the beginning of systematic philosophy in the *Logic*.⁶³

But the scope of Hegel's claim that skepticism is a moment of philosophy is not meant to be limited to the *Phenomenology*. On the contrary, the claim is made at the beginning of the *Logic*, and is clearly meant to apply to the *Logic* (as well as to the rest of the system). But we have already noted that the claim cannot be interpreted to mean that the *Logic* incorporates the method of equipollence. What the *Logic* does incorporate, however, is the form of consciousness shared by all of the ancient skeptics Hegel admires, and we should therefore understand this consciousness to comprise the dialectical or skeptical moment of speculative reason.

Recall that the skeptical consciousness common to the Academics and the Pyrrhonists is one that recognizes the finitude and instability of the thought determinations of the understanding. It is precisely this consciousness that is essential to the skeptical or dialectical moment of logical thinking. The first moment of logical thinking, the abstract moment of the understanding, insists on making each thought as distinct and precise as possible.

This is necessary, but not sufficient, for logical thinking. The second moment of such logical thinking, the dialectical moment, is “the self-sublation of these finite determinations on their own part, and their passing into their opposites. . . . [It] is [their] *immanent* transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, i.e., as their negation”⁶⁴

Without this dialectical moment, thought would remain fixed on the precise determinations identified by the understanding, and the *Logic* would never develop. Hence Hegel writes that “the dialectical constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone *immanent coherence and necessity* enter into the content of science.”⁶⁵ But without the skeptical consciousness first achieved by the ancients, the consciousness that “the finite is not restricted merely from the outside; rather it sublates itself by virtue of its own nature, and passes over, of itself, into its opposite,” the thinker would never allow the dialectical moment to transpire.⁶⁶ The skeptical consciousness of the ancients is thus essential to the dialectical moment of thinking, which is in turn essential to the immanent and necessary development of thought, which is in turn the *sine qua non* of systematic philosophy. It is therefore this consciousness, shared by all of the ancient skeptics Hegel admires, rather than the method of equipollence, employed by only some of them, that is absolutely indispensable.

Notes

1. The early essay is “*Verhältnis des Skepticismus zur Philosophie: Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modifikationen und Vergleich des Neuesten mit dem Alten*,” which originally appeared in *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* 1 (1802): 1–74. It may be found in G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Schriften: 1801–1807*, vol. 2 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 213–272, and is available in translation by H. S. Harris as “Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy: Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One,” in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 311–362. Hereafter cited as “Skepticism,” with the number before the slash referring to the Suhrkamp pagination, and the number after the slash to the translation.

2. Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1. Emphasis added.

3. Michael Williams comments that for Stroud “the problem of the possibility of knowledge of the world is the problem of scepticism.” Michael Williams, “Skepticism without Theory,” *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (March 1988): 547 n. 1.

4. Kenneth R. Westphal, "Hegel, Harris, and Sextus Empiricus," *The Owl of Minerva* 31:2 (Spring 2000): 155–172, and *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), especially chapters 6 and 7.

5. Michael Baur, "The Role of Skepticism in the Emergence of German Idealism," in *The Emergence of German Idealism*, ed. Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1999), 63–91.

6. Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), especially chapter 1. Robert R. Williams, "Hegel and Skepticism," *The Owl of Minerva* 24: 1 (Fall 1992): 71–82.

7. Forster writes that it "might reasonably be maintained" that "the equipollence method in some sense defines the character of ancient skepticism." *Hegel and Skepticism*, 19. Robert Williams claims that "the general strategy of classical skepticism is *isosthenia*, the method of equipoise or equipollence, which consists in opposing a position or argument with an opposite position or argument of equal weight and validity." "Hegel and Skepticism," 74.

8. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, 10.

9. Robert Williams, "Hegel and Skepticism," 73.

10. H. S. Harris argues that Hegel's reconstruction of ancient skepticism is in fact historically inaccurate. H. S. Harris, "Skepticism, Dogmatism and Speculation in the Critical Journal," *Between Kant and Hegel*, 252–271, especially 258–259. This may well be the case, but is unimportant for my purposes. Whether or not Hegel's account of the developments of the different ancient traditions is accurate, studying it undoubtedly sheds light on Hegel's understanding of skepticism, which is what I am after. Nonetheless, I will identify below several specific points on which scholars of ancient skepticism dispute Hegel's views.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, vol. 19 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 249–403. Translated by E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simon as *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 2: Plato and the Platonists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 23–373. Hereafter cited as *Lectures*, with the number before the slash referring to the Suhrkamp pagination, and the number after the slash to the translation, which I have often modified.

12. *Lectures*, 367/338.

13. *Lectures*, 336/311.

14. *Lectures*, 367/339. Also see "Skepticism," 248/338, where Hegel writes that the distinction the Skeptics draw between themselves and the Academy is "something entirely empty."

15. Michael Williams argues that such a separation of skepticism into theory and practice is not only unhelpful but "makes a proper understanding of Pyrrhonian skepticism all but impossible." "Skepticism without Theory," 548.

16. *Lectures*, 338/313. This is denied by David Sedley, who credits Arcesilaus with discovering the dialectical method of equipollence. David Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. M. F. Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 10–11.

17. Hegel expressly says that the epoché of Arcesilaus is "the same principle that the Skeptics had." *Lectures*, 340/314.

18. *Lectures*, 340–341/315.
19. *Lectures*, 345/317. The passage Hegel is referring to is in Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Book I, 154 (Greek pagination). Common practice, which I will follow, is to refer to *Against the Logicians* Books I and II as *Against the Mathematicians* Books VII and VIII. Whether or not Hegel is projecting modern distinctions back onto Arcesilaus is an interesting question, raised by Forster. Forster suggests, in fact, that Hegel has a bad habit of making such projections. See *Hegel and Skepticism*, 38.
20. *Lectures*, 346/318. Hegel is citing Arcesilaus in Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 154–156.
21. *Lectures*, 347/319. Hegel is citing Arcesilaus in Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 158.
22. *Lectures*, 348/320. This incident is also mentioned by Sedley, who cites Cicero as its source. “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism,” 17.
23. Hegel finds evidence for this in Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 159–160, which he cites in the *Lectures*, 349/321. Cicero disputes this, attributing to Carneades a doctrine of the probable. Cicero, *Academica*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), Book II, 99 (Latin pagination). Michael Frede echoes Cicero. Michael Frede, “The Skeptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge,” in *Philosophy in History*, ed. Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 268.
24. *Lectures*, 336/311.
25. *Lectures*, 350/321–322.
26. *Lectures*, 354/325.
27. *Lectures*, 356/327.
28. At *Lectures*, 354–355/325, Hegel cites Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 166–169, on this point. It should be noted that the debate over whether Arcesilaus, but not Carneades, clings to a doctrine of the probable is perhaps moot. M. F. Burnyeat points out that “probable” is often a mistranslation of “pithanon,” which is better rendered as “convincing.” M. F. Burnyeat, “Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, 123. If this is the case, then the distinction Hegel makes between the two on this point (which others dispute) may well disappear.
29. *Lectures*, 353/324.
30. *Lectures*, 357–358/327–328.
31. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
32. *Lectures*, 374–375/346–347. Also see “Skepticism,” 238/330, 243/334. This view is extremely controversial. The variety of stances taken in the literature on the relation of the several groups of modes to each other is too great to consider here.
33. *Lectures*, 360/331.
34. *Lectures*, 358/328.
35. *Lectures*, 359–360/330. In “Skepticism,” Hegel confirms that both the earlier ten tropes and the later five tropes of Pyrrhonism lead to this result. See 238/330–331 and 245–246/335–336, respectively.
36. *Lectures*, 362/335. Although the form of expression is different, Hegel’s conclusion here is remarkably similar to that of Frede. See “Two Kinds of Assent,” 260.

37. That the Pyrrhonists had something much like the modern distinction between representation and object is supported by Burnyeat, who argues that they distinguished between appearance and real existence. The distinction he draws has strong similarities to the one Hegel is making. See "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?" 128.

38. Sextus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I, 231 (Greek pagination).

39. This shows that Hegel thinks living Pyrrhonian skepticism is not such a difficult trick as it is often made out to be. Shedding belief does not necessarily require a radical detachment from oneself, as Burnyeat argues in "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?" 129. On the contrary, it can arise from a simple giving in to the impressions and inclinations one happens to have (without believing those impressions to be true or even probably true). Frede takes a line similar to Hegel on this point in "Two Kinds of Assent," 264.

40. *Lectures*, 385/356. H. S. Harris maintains that Hegel has this wrong: "Far from being directed against ordinary experience (as Hegel maintains) the tropes deploy that experience against the philosopher." "Skepticism, Dogmatism and Speculation," 264.

41. *Lectures*, 375/346–347.

42. *Lectures*, 376/347.

43. *Lectures*, 382–383/353, 385/356.

44. *Lectures*, 383/354.

45. *Lectures*, 383/354. Hegel is citing Sextus in *Outlines*, I, 137, 140.

46. Burnyeat agrees with this interpretation, holding that the skeptics use these general arguments to show that any possible dogmatic assertion has a powerful counter-assertion. "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?" 138.

47. *Lectures*, 388/359.

48. Forster also notes this feature of Hegel's interpretation. *Hegel and Skepticism*, 10.

49. *Lectures*, 394/365. This quote, and the one immediately preceding, make clear that Hegel does not share Michael Williams's view that the five modes are designed as specific counterbalances to epistemological arguments the dogmatists sometimes make. See "Skepticism without Theory," 579.

50. *Lectures*, 345/317.

51. See Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, 11, and Michael Williams, "Skepticism without Theory," 584, for similar assessments of the problems typical of modern skepticism.

52. *Lectures*, 375/347. For this characterization of modern skepticism, also see *Lectures*, 360–361/331–332, and 388/359. Hegel's attacks on modern skepticism are addressed most directly to his contemporary, G. E. Schulze. However, he also makes it clear that he considers Hume susceptible to the same charges. He does not include Descartes as a modern skeptic, for he takes seriously (without necessarily granting the success of) Descartes's claim to have argued himself out of his doubts.

53. *Lectures*, 361/332.

54. "Skepticism," 249–250/338–339.

55. *Lectures*, 373/344.

56. *Lectures*, 394/364.

57. *Lectures*, 398/368.

58. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I*, vol. 8 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), §§79–82. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris as *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991). Hereafter cited as *Enc*.

59. *Enc*, §81 *Zusatz* 2.

60. Robert Williams, 76.

61. *Enc*, §81 *Zusatz* 1.

62. *Lectures*, 361/333–334.

63. It should be emphasized, however, that skepticism brings us only *part* of the way through the *Phenomenology*. Proud of its successful attacks on dogmatism, and unaware of the possibility of a nondogmatic approach to philosophy, skepticism believes its standpoint to be ultimate and unassailable. It does not see, as Hegel shows in the *Phenomenology*, that its own standpoint is finite and self-contradictory. As Robert Williams has written, “the *Phenomenology* is the genuine *Aufhebung* of skepticism,” and “when skepticism argues with philosophy, it comprehends the latter falsely and then proceeds to argue against its false construal.” “Hegel and Skepticism,” 81–82.

64. *Enc*, §81, and *Anmerkung*.

65. *Enc*, §81, and *Anmerkung*.

66. *Enc*, §81 *Zusatz* 1.

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Chapter 6

The Historicity of Philosophy and the Role of Skepticism



Tanja Staehler

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel claims that although skepticism has always been held to be the “invincible opponent of philosophy,” in fact “it does not oppose it, nor is it outside of it, for skepticism is a moment in it,” namely, in “positive philosophy,” as Hegel calls it (*HPh* II, 359/330).¹ In this paper, I want to examine how Hegel comes to this conclusion. First, I will present Hegel’s idea of the historicity of philosophy: How is it that philosophy is a temporal development, and what do Hegel’s insights into the nature of this development mean for dealing with the history of philosophy and for the question of how to make a beginning in philosophy? The second part of the paper offers an outline of Hegel’s discussion of skepticism in three of his works, namely, in an early essay on skepticism, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. In these texts, Hegel distinguishes between different forms of skepticism that have carried out the skeptical principle to a lower or higher degree. In the third part, I want to describe the essential features of ancient skepticism as we find them in Hegel’s lectures and in Sextus Empiricus’s accounts, the latter being, according to Hegel, the most important writings on skepticism. The fourth and last part deals with the role of skepticism in Hegel’s philosophy; I will show how skepticism as “thoroughgoing skepticism,” i.e., as skepticism that has fully recognized its principle, is indeed inherent in Hegel’s own philosophy.

The Historicity of Philosophy and the Problem of Beginning

The important question Hegel has to answer at the outset of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* is the question “as to how it happens that philosophy

appears to be a development in time and has a history" (*HPh* I, 51/32). The answer to this question is grounded in the essence of spirit. Spirit's Being is its activity; spirit has to become external to itself, and one form of externality is time. However, spirit will never fully unfold within some individual time consciousness or within the time of one individual being, for spirit is not individual, finite consciousness, but is universal and concrete: hence its progression as total actuality, i.e., as history.

What moves spirit is the force of negativity. An example of this negativity is the relationship between consciousness (as the appearance of spirit) and its object: The negative first occurs as the difference between consciousness and the object it knows or perceives, and this difference can be regarded as the lack of both. Knowledge is lacking its object since the object is external to it and since it cannot be completely incorporated, and the object is lacking knowledge, which it cannot achieve by itself. Yet this difference is that which moves consciousness, given that consciousness tries to eliminate the difference through negation. As the negating movement continues, it becomes obvious that negation indeed causes progress and that the movement does not end (not until spirit has come to itself and has sublated all differences, all negativity). The movement is brought about by negation in the form of determinate negation. The result is not pure nothingness, but the nothingness accruing to the aboriginal moment; thus, it has a content.

Since spirit develops according to the principle of determinate negation, we can follow its movement as a necessary and rational development. This leads to a new concept of the history of philosophy. The common opinion about the history of philosophy proves itself to be wrong: It is not an accumulation of opinions, an assemblage of contingent thoughts following one after the other in time. If the history of philosophy were an accumulation of that kind, it would just be a matter of erudition, and dealing with it would be useless and dull. Yet philosophy as the movement of developing spirit is essentially connection, and philosophy is ultimately *one* movement of thought. The reason for the unity of philosophy is to be found in the fact that truth is *one*—but this claim first remains abstract and formal and will be brought to concretion and clarity only in the process of thought. It is the starting point and the aim of philosophy to recognize this one basic truth (cf. *HPh* I, 38/19).

Insofar as spirit institutes itself as external in history, "the study of the history of philosophy is the study of philosophy itself" (*HPh* I, 49/30). Hegel maintains that if the fundamental concepts emerging in the history of philosophy are entirely divested of their outward form, we can come to see the various stages of the developing idea itself.

Furthermore, if philosophy is essentially one and, therefore, the history of philosophy is mainly connection and unity, it becomes obvious why the

history of philosophy is of significance *for us today*. At first glance, the historical activities of thought seem to be a matter of the past, being beyond our present actuality. But we have to recognize that what *we* are is what we are as historical beings. The process of history does not represent the becoming of things alien to us, but *our own becoming*.² What we are today stems from the legacy of history; we owe our very identity to tradition.

Having developed the general idea of the history of philosophy as well as its significance, Hegel sums his insights up in four conclusions (cf. *HPh* I, 55 ff./36 ff.). First, the history of philosophy is a progression with an inherent *necessity*, in contrast with contingency, which must vanish upon the appearance of philosophy. Second, philosophy is *one* whole. Since every philosophy has been necessary and still is, all of them are connected and all of them are preserved as elements in the whole of philosophy. Third, the emphasis is to be put on the *principles* by which each has reigned for a certain time; the respective shapes and applications of the principles are not as important. Fourth, in dealing with history, we are not dealing with the past; we are not dealing with something that has passed, but with something still *significant* for us *today*.

From these insights, three important conclusions can be drawn concerning how to deal with the history of philosophy (cf. *HPh* I, 60 ff./41 ff.), conclusions which, of course, will be relevant as well for the discussion of ancient skepticism. First of all, the earliest philosophies are the poorest and the most abstract, while the latest philosophy is the richest and deepest and a mirror of the whole history. Second, if we deal with older philosophies, we must not blame them for missing determinations that were not yet present for them at the time. And third, each philosophy has its place in the development of the whole process. This place has to be recognized and considered in order to do justice to what is particular in a given philosophy.

The points Hegel develops in the introduction to his lectures are important for the analysis of the particular form of philosophy that is to follow, but they also provide important insights into Hegel's own concept of history as internally connected with the development of philosophy and into his notion of philosophy as itself essentially historical. Only after developing the concept of a history of philosophy in general does Hegel turn to the problem of the beginning of philosophy. One might wonder whether the question of beginning would not rather be a question we must start with, but Hegel's procedure has the advantage that after getting to know what philosophy is about we are able to recognize the beginning as Hegel unfolds it for us and to understand the conditions for this beginning as he determines them. However, it is not possible to give an account of philosophy's content beforehand since philosophy does not reflect on an object already present as a substratum (cf. *HPh* I, 111/90).

If one wants to give a preliminary answer as to what philosophy is about (an answer that only gains its concretion in its historical development), it could be said that philosophy deals with thought, with the universal, which is all being (cf. *HPh* I, 115/94). Thus, philosophy and its history begin where existence is grasped as the universal (or vice versa), or where thinking about thought emerges. Thinking about the universal and about the whole of being requires that we are no longer directed toward singular beings and bound to them; thought must liberate itself from the natural, from being immersed in matter, and must become free thinking. Where did this freedom of thinking first occur? Hegel's answer is: "Philosophy first begins in the Greek world. . . . It is in the West that this freedom of self-consciousness first comes forth, natural consciousness goes down into itself and spirit comes to itself" (*HPh* I, 117 ff./96 ff., my translation). Philosophy begins when a statement is made about the whole of being: e.g., "The principle of things is water."³

Yet the question of philosophy's beginning always has a double meaning: on the one hand, there *was* a historical beginning of philosophy; on the other hand, the beginning of philosophy has to be carried out over and over again as *our own* beginning if we want to enter into philosophy for ourselves. There is a fundamental problem involved in the beginning of philosophy which consists of the fact that philosophy does not allow for an introduction from the outside. Philosophy has no fixed range of matters to be considered from an external standpoint; one cannot gain an insight into philosophy before entering the realm of philosophy itself. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel describes this problem poignantly: "But to want the nature of cognition clarified *prior* to the science is to demand that it be considered *outside* the science; *outside* the science this cannot be accomplished, at least not in a scientific manner and such a manner is alone here in place" (*L* I, 67/68). Thus, an entry into philosophy can only be achieved in a philosophizing way.

We will see later the answer skepticism provides to the question of beginning; in the following part, I will give an outline of Hegel's discussion of skepticism. This outline is supposed to show the significance Hegel attributes to skepticism, as well as to give clues concerning the common points of Hegel's philosophy and skepticism, which will then have to be clarified in the third and fourth parts of this essay.

Hegel's Discussion of Skepticism

In the following, I want to examine three stages of Hegel's discussion of skepticism—without, however, claiming any completeness of the account. Hegel tackles skepticism for the first time in 1802 in an essay entitled "The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy: A Presentation of Its Various

Modifications and a Comparison of the Newest Skepticism with Ancient Skepticism.” This essay deals in a partly rather polemic way with a new form of skepticism that was presented by Gottlob Ernst Schulze in his book *Critique of Theoretical Philosophy*. Hegel criticizes Schulze’s theory by showing its inner contradictions, as well as showing how it did not remain true to the principles of ancient skepticism. Ancient skepticism is said to be widely superior to the new skepticism since it refrains from expressing a certainty about Being whereas the new skepticism develops the concept of a thing that lies behind and underneath the things as appearing (cf. *RSP*, 247 f.). Instead of criticizing natural consciousness and showing its contradictions, a strategy which, according to Hegel, is the most valuable side of ancient skepticism, the new skepticism asserts the certainty of natural consciousness’s convictions. It affirms that every fact of consciousness is certain and true. Ancient skepticism, on the other hand, develops and maintains the true principle of skepticism, as it will be investigated in the following part of this paper.

By contrasting ancient and new skepticism, Hegel arrives at two important insights into the relation of ancient skepticism to philosophy: First, ancient skepticism can be regarded as the first step on the way to philosophy, meaning that it can provide a beginning of philosophy. For philosophy has to begin with natural consciousness, it has to overcome the convictions of natural consciousness, and this is exactly what ancient skepticism does by opposing the dogmatism of common consciousness. New skepticism, on the other hand, asserts the truth of natural consciousness and hence can be refuted not only by ancient skepticism, but even by natural consciousness itself, which knows very well that its convictions do not hold as stable truth (cf. *RSP*, 240).

Secondly, Hegel states that skepticism in its true form is intimately one with philosophy, and that its principle can be found as an implicit moment of each philosophical system. This principle is expressed in the sentence: “*panti logo logos isos antikeitai*” (“There is an equally valid *logos* opposed to every *logos*”). The fact that this principle does not obey the law of contradiction cannot be brought up as a valid objection since, according to Hegel, every genuine philosophy has to sublate the law of contradiction; thus, this “negative side,” this principle of skepticism, is inherent in every genuine philosophy.

In the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), the thesis that skepticism is a principle inherent in philosophy emerges again. Two forms of skepticism are distinguished in this text: on the one hand, there is “thoroughgoing skepticism” (*PhS*, 72/50); on the other hand, we encounter skepticism as a mere shape (*Gestalt*) of incomplete consciousness. Skepticism as being just a shape has not yet fully recognized itself. Following the shape of stoicism and preceding so-called “unhappy consciousness,” skepticism as a

shape is the negative in itself and annihilates the being of the world (PhS 159/123).⁴ However, what skepticism in this incomplete form does not recognize and what causes its inner contradictions is the fact that the nothingness evolving out of negation is not a pure nothingness, but a determinate nothingness. The principle that incomplete skepticism does not yet have at its disposal but that presents the essential feature of thoroughgoing skepticism is the principle of *determinate negation*. In recognizing that the nothingness resulting from negation is determined by what is negated as well as preserved and elevated in it, a new shape of consciousness has arisen.

Skepticism has a significance for the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in yet another sense: It can be shown that there is a movement going on in this book that is similar to the skeptical *epoché*. Realizing that opposite topics and arguments have equal validity, the Sceptics decided to refrain from judgment altogether; this refraining is the *epoché*, which is important to ancient skepticism. In the introduction to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes a shift necessary at the beginning of spirit's development that has certain similarities with this *epoché*. Hegel is talking about a "we," a "we" that accompanies consciousness on its way to absolute knowing. "We" are already philosophers, and precisely because of this, we are not allowed to prescribe anything to natural consciousness, but just to watch it take its course. Hegel says that "all that is left for us to do is simply to look on"⁵ (PhS, 77/54), and that in order to do this we should leave aside all our criteria and ideas about the matter at hand: which basically means that we ought to refrain from assumptions and judgments.⁶ Refraining from all judgments yields presuppositionlessness, which is the condition for entering into science. The transition into philosophy is not a continuous one, but rather requires something like a leap, as it were. This fact is articulated by Hegel's request to leave all assumptions aside in the very beginning.

Finally, certain features of skepticism show up in Hegel's account of the first shape of consciousness in his *Phenomenology*, sense-certainty.⁷ The well-known example that is used to show the inner contradictoriness of sense-certainty, "Now is Night," can be found in Sextus Empiricus.⁸ Moreover, confronting the statement "Now is Night" with the statement "Now is Day" or "Now is Noon" means to follow the skeptical principle. While ancient skepticism's response to the confrontation of statements having equal rights would be to carry out the *epoché* and thus to refrain from judgment, the result in Hegel is a determinate negation, which means moving on to the next moment of sense-certainty. As we will see below, what is called the ten tropes of Pyrrhonian skepticism can be put into a relation with the three moments of sense-certainty. Let me just note here that the third moment, mere pointing, resembles the reaction of Cratylus, who, after recognizing the impossibility of expressing a true statement, proceeded just to move his finger.⁹

Whereas in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* skepticism plays an important role in a number of respects, the significance of skepticism for Hegel's method seems to diminish in the *Science of Logic* and in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. Yet there are some remarks in the *Encyclopaedia* that show the continuing importance of skepticism; it seems that in developing the final shape of his method, Hegel integrated the skeptical principle into his method such that he no longer dealt with it separately. In Paragraph 78 of the *Encyclopaedia*, we find some short, dense remarks about skepticism. Hegel states that "being a negative science that has gone through all forms of cognition, skepticism might offer itself as an introduction" (*Enc*, §78). But at the same time, Hegel designates the skeptical way as "redundant" since it is an essential element of affirmative science; besides, it only takes up the finite forms "empirically and unscientifically." Is there a contradiction between calling skepticism a science and saying that it proceeds unscientifically? If these statements are to be true without contradicting each other, they have to refer to different aspects of the problem. The problem is connected with the distinction between thoroughgoing skepticism and incomplete skepticism as Hegel develops it in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Skepticism is scientific insofar as it is thoroughgoing skepticism, skepticism recognizing its principle. But, as Hegel says in Paragraph 78 of the *Encyclopaedia*, skepticism that has gone through all forms of cognition is a moment of affirmative science, and if it is integrated in this way, it no longer serves as an introduction. On the other hand, skepticism as a separate way of doing philosophy, independent of other moments of science, could provide a possible introduction to philosophy. Skepticism that has not yet fully come to its principle is closer to natural consciousness and would in that sense make a good introduction. However, skepticism regarded as separate from science is unscientific; it merely takes up shapes as it finds them and is thus determined by contingency. Incomplete skepticism lacks the necessity science requires, and it does not provide completeness, for it merely takes up what it happens to find.

Since the problem of a beginning of philosophy lies in the very fact that this beginning must already be science, skepticism as incomplete and unscientific cannot serve as a beginning; the question whether thoroughgoing skepticism can provide an introduction will be taken up below. The quest for thoroughgoing skepticism, so Hegel says, can be equated with presuppositionlessness as the condition for science; yet this condition is carried out in the "determination to think purely" (*ibid.*) ("*in dem Entschluß, rein denken zu wollen*"). This determination resembles the request to leave all assumptions aside in the very beginning, as it is expressed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. While philosophy on the one hand requires a leap in the beginning, on the other hand it has to go through a movement, a development,

and it is to Hegel's merit to put the emphasis on the developmental character of philosophy. Therefore, the "determination to think purely" is not sufficient; it is only a first step. The question is how to move on, and skepticism, as long as it is merely negative, does not provide an answer to this question.

In the following part, I want to give an account of the concept of skepticism as Hegel develops it in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*; I will thereby contextualize what has been evoked in the previous sections.

Essential Features of Ancient Skepticism

What are the essential features of ancient skepticism that Hegel develops in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*? Since Hegel states himself that Sextus Empiricus is by far the most important philosopher of skepticism (cf. *HPh* II, 367/338), the main focus here will be on Sextus's account of Pyrrhonian skepticism as it is presented in Hegel's lectures and as Sextus presents it in his own writings. The term *skepsis* derives from the verb *skeptomai*, which means to look around, to examine, to search. Sextus introduces the Skeptics by distinguishing three types of philosophy, all of which have in common that they search for something (*OP* I, 1). The first group are the so-called Dogmatics, who claim that they have found the truth. The second group are the Academics, who state that the truth cannot be apprehended. The third are the Skeptics, who are still searching and continue to do so.

Hegel begins his account by saying that skepticism substituted for Being the idea of appearance (*HPh* II, 358/328). To understand both the problems skepticism was responding to and the solutions it suggested, it is essential to clarify the distinction between Being and appearance. Already in pre-philosophical life, we encounter the relativity of appearances: for example, people argue about matters that appear differently to them, and in doing so, they presuppose that there is something like a true and final answer to the question, since otherwise there would be no point in arguing. The argument presupposes that the matter in question actually *is* one way or the other, and that this true Being of the matter can be disclosed. Natural consciousness claims that "Now is Night," not seeing that things are never permanent but always changing. The example of night and day that Sextus first brought up and that Hegel employs as the major example in his analysis of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is taken up in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*; Hegel says furthermore that skepticism is directed against sense-certainty, which takes its object as the truth as such (cf. *HPh* II, 372/344).

Natural consciousness has the tendency not to remain with the things as they appear, but to attribute a Being to those things. Yet when conscious-

ness takes something as the truth, it holds on to it and is thus bound to it; and since this truth is not stable but changes and moves, consciousness loses its stability and its rest (cf. *HPh* II, 369/342). In order to bring the soul to rest, consciousness has to refrain from judgments about the Being of things. *Ataraxia*, repose of the soul, is the goal of skepticism. Like other Hellenistic schools, such as the Stoics and Epicureans, the Skeptics' aim was to live a good and happy life, i.e., to achieve *eudaimonia*. It was not their aim to found a science or to give satisfying answers to epistemological problems. The question is thus how to come to *ataraxia*, and the Pyrrhonian answer is the *epoché*, the suspension of judgment.

It is not possible to achieve *ataraxia* directly by striving to get there, but rather *ataraxia* follows by chance, as it were. In a passage Hegel quotes at full length in his lectures, Sextus compares the skeptical way to the procedure of the painter Appelles who wanted to paint a horse and failed in painting the horse's froth, but when he gave up and threw his sponge at the picture, the sponge produced the desired effect (cf. *OP* I, 12; *HPh*, 370/342). In a similar way, the Skeptics hoped to achieve *ataraxia* by solving the problems of things as they appear and things as they are thought, and when they realized that they were unable to do this, they refrained from judgment altogether, and, as if by chance, *ataraxia* followed. *Ataraxia* itself is not something we can strive for immediately; yet the *epoché* is something we can willfully carry out. Sextus describes our attitude after carrying out the *epoché*: The appearance of the object is not called into question, since the appearance lies in "involuntary *pathos*," so that none "disputes about whether the external object appears this way or that, but rather about whether it is such as it appears to be" (*OP* I, 11). To use one of Sextus's examples, I grant that the honey appears to me to be sweet, but whether it is sweet has to remain open. Hegel says that sensuous beings were valid for the Skeptics, but only as appearances according to which they led their lives and not as the truth (cf. *HPh* II, 366/337). Since the Skeptics' question was how to lead a good life, they needed some criteria for doing this, and so they held onto appearances and, particularly, to the habits and customs as they were instituted in their time.

The Skeptics did not make any statement about the Being of the objects, but only about their appearance, and this is exactly the aim of the *epoché*. Yet to carry out the *epoché*, to refrain from judgment about the Being of the appearing objects, requires a certain presupposition; namely, it presupposes that there is a gap between appearance and Being, between the thing as it *appears* and the thing as it *is*. Only if such a gap exists do we have the option of either bridging this gap or restricting ourselves to appearances. In that sense, skepticism is not fully true to its intentions, since to presuppose a gap between concealed Being and disclosed appearance is a dogmatic presupposition that cannot come to the fore in the realm of appearance. This

slight inconsistency in ancient skepticism is carried further by modern skepticism, which is based on this gap, and, furthermore, attributes truth to appearances; Hegel criticizes modern skepticism for claiming indubitable certainty of the facts of consciousness (cf. *HPh* II, 375/347; *RSP*, 220 ff.).

For Hegel, ancient skepticism preserved the essence of the skeptical principle, and the tropes¹⁰ express this principle. In the earlier ten tropes, there is, according to Hegel, a lack of abstraction that becomes obvious in the fact that their diversity could be grasped under more general points of view. To support this view, Hegel quotes Sextus Empiricus, who states that superordinate to the ten tropes are three, "one based on what does the judging, another based on what is judged, and a third based on both" (*OP* I, 14). Furthermore, Sextus explains that the first four tropes are based on the judging subject; these deal with the differences among animals, the differences among human beings, the differences that distinguish the various senses, and, finally, circumstantial differences. The seventh and the tenth trope, which concern the quantity and constitution of external objects and ways of life, customs, laws, and mystic beliefs, refer to what is judged. Based on both sides are tropes number five, six, eight, and nine, which concern positions and locations, admixtures, relativity, and the frequency or infrequency of occurrence.

Hegel says that the earlier tropes are directed against common sense and against sense-certainty (cf. *HPh* II, 372 ff./343 ff.), and it is possible indeed to show a relation between the three groups of tropes and the three moments of sense-certainty. Sense-certainty first takes the object, the judged, as the truth; but since external objects change all the time and the only thing remaining in the change is the pure "This," sense-certainty attributes the truth to the knowing or judging subject. Yet what I see is not what another "I" sees; and again sense-certainty, which was directed toward the singular, arrives at the universal, the universal "I." In a final attempt, sense-certainty posits the whole of both sides, the relation of subject and object as its essence, but when sense-certainty points to a Now, this Now has already ceased to be in the act of pointing to it. Hegel says that the skeptical tropes are directed against the "is," for "the truth is not the dry 'is', but genuine process" (*HPh* II, 380/351). The analysis of sense-certainty comes to the same result: The fact that something *is* seems to be a fixed, permanent truth; but already in the simple "is," there is a movement going on that we cannot evade.

While the ten earlier tropes are basically directed against the convictions of natural consciousness, the five later tropes oppose philosophy. They can be summed up as dealing with disagreement, infinite regress, relativity, hypothesis, and circularity. The Skeptics's most fundamental accusation against philosophy as it is represented by Dogmatics and Academics is that they

either give a reason that rests on another presupposition and so on, so that one is led into an infinite regress, or they give a reason that is itself grounded in what should follow from it, so that one is led into a circle. Hegel agrees with the skeptical criticism insofar as it concerns the metaphysics of understanding (*Verstandesmetaphysik*) because philosophies of this persuasion take something determined and finite for the absolute, which necessarily leads to contradiction. He claims, however, that speculative idealism resists this critique, for reasons we will see below.

The Role of Skepticism in Hegel's Philosophy

There are two major points of criticism Hegel puts forward against skepticism, both of which I have already mentioned: First, skepticism is merely negative, failing to notice the affirmative element that is inherent in negation; secondly, skepticism limits itself to contingencies. Both of those elements lead to skepticism not really being qualified as a science in Hegel's eyes. Skepticism does not recognize that a negation has an affirmative element, that negation is in fact determinate negation. Therefore, skepticism is merely destructive (cf. *HPh* II, 360/330); it cannot progress since a constructive element is missing. Hegel describes the movement of skepticism as that which "annuls for itself all things, in which what is offered to it is quite contingent and indifferent" (*HPh* II, 401/371). Hence, the two deficiencies of skepticism go together; skepticism takes up whatever just comes along and negates it. The ten earlier tropes might serve as examples for this procedure: Pyrrhonian skepticism as directed against natural consciousness takes up some contingent features and shows their contradictoriness, e.g., human idiosyncrasies that lead one person to consider being in the shade to be cold, another considering the shade to be pleasant; it fails to detect the essential features of natural consciousness, show their contradictoriness, and then move on to a different shape of consciousness altogether.

If, because of its mere negativity and its contingency, skepticism does not meet the conditions of being a science, in what sense then does Hegel regard the skeptical principle as inherent in his own philosophy? Hegel says that positive philosophy has skepticism's negativity in itself, but negativity "in its truth, as it is not present in skepticism" (*HPh* II, 359/330). The tension thus can be resolved if we keep in mind that there is a distinction between skepticism as thoroughgoing skepticism and incomplete skepticism. According to Hegel, both ancient and modern skepticism are incomplete, but ancient skepticism is much closer to thoroughgoing skepticism than the modern one. Yet how do thoroughgoing skepticism and incomplete skepticism relate to each other? They cannot be completely separated from each

other, since the thesis is that there is a common principle in both and not just an identity of the title; besides, it would not then make sense to talk about ancient skepticism being closer to the skeptical principle or about “thoroughgoing” skepticism. Thoroughgoing skepticism is not a different skepticism, but a skepticism that goes all the way in carrying out its principle. The relation of these two forms of skepticism can be compared to the relation of natural and philosophical consciousness expressed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: We do not deal with two different consciousnesses; rather, if natural consciousness has grasped itself in its essence, it is philosophical consciousness.

Thoroughgoing skepticism is in possession of the principle of determinate negation; this means that it gives way to progression. Moreover, it is characterized by necessity instead of contingency, for it chooses its starting point deliberately instead of just taking up what presents itself. The starting point has to be the immediate, the immediate in its essential determinations. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this immediate is natural consciousness, and in this sense it is what the ten earlier tropes of skepticism are directed against. Yet Hegel first questions natural consciousness as to what its essential features are, and he considers sense-certainty as the very first shape of such consciousness, sense-certainty, which essentially claims about its object that it is. If we are to look at all the individual shapes natural consciousness can assume, there can never be completeness; but if we start off with what is identically the same in all of them, we have a common starting point. From this point on, “the necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of the unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the *completion* of the series” (*PhS*, 73/50).

Hence, thoroughgoing skepticism is scientific; furthermore, it is particularly qualified for providing a beginning to philosophy because of its presuppositionlessness. It does not bring about its own theory, but merely serves as a principle to detect contradictions, negate them, and move on from them. Since the skeptical principle is inherent in speculative idealism from the very start, Hegel’s philosophy can resist the criticism put forward by the Skeptics against philosophy, as he points out in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: “But however much force these moments of its negative dialectic may have against the properly-speaking dogmatic knowledge of the understanding, its attacks against the true infinite of the speculative Idea are most feeble and unsatisfactory” (*HPh* II, 397/367). For the system of speculative idealism has the absolute negative in itself; it contains the aboriginal moment and its negation. Or, put differently, since the skeptical principle is inherent in speculative idealism and since such idealism developed according to this principle, it cannot be opposed by it. The skeptical principle is at work in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* every time we move from one form of philosophy to the next.

In sublating the skeptical principle in his own philosophy, Hegel accomplishes a realization of a principle that, according to his own account, ancient skepticism never did achieve. But there is another reason why Hegel has to divest the skeptical principle of its original form and take it up as a mere abstract principle. This reason is grounded in the historicity of philosophy: taking up ancient skepticism in its concrete form would presume that the level of consciousness has remained the same, but this is not the case and can never be the case. As far as ancient skepticism is concerned, there is a certain “lightheartedness” of consciousness required which we no longer have.¹¹ The skeptical aim of achieving *ataraxia* means a return of consciousness to its simplicity (Cf. *HPh* II, 371/342). The skeptical thesis is that tension and restlessness evolve when consciousness becomes bound to something; this gets manifested in dogmatism. Once the uselessness of dogmatic sense-giving is realized, consciousness returns to its initial stage; it is led by the appearing objects without inquiring into their Being, and takes up customs and habits that were handed down to it. This is no longer possible for us today: the historical level of consciousness is not a stage of lightheartedness, and we are not surrounded by customs and habits that we could simply take over. The subjectivism of the modern era calls us to question all traditional habits so radically that there is no possibility for us to take them for granted. The historical development of consciousness goes on, and we cannot find peace by falling back into a previous stage. Therefore, Hegel extracts the skeptical principle, carries it out to its full extent, and integrates it into his own philosophy.

However, the question remains this: What do Hegel’s insights into the historicity of philosophy mean for the way in which we take up Hegel’s philosophy for ourselves today? Hegel is clear about one thing: in dealing with history, we are not dealing with what is past.¹²

Notes

1. The following abbreviations for Hegel’s works (German text and English translation) are used in this paper (the first page number in the appropriate notes refers to the German text, the second to the English translation):

Enc = *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften. Werke* in zwanzig Bänden. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel on basis of the *Werke* 1832–1845 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970/71), vol. 8–10. *The Encyclopaedia Logic*. Part I of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* with *Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

HPh = *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Werke* vol. 18–20. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 vol., trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances Simson (New York: Humanities Press, 1974).

L = *Die Wissenschaft der Logik. Werke* vol. 5, 6. *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London, New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

PhS = *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes. Werke* vol. 3. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

RSP = "Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zur Philosophie. Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modifikationen und Vergleichung des neuesten mit dem alten," in *Werke*, vol. 2, 213–272. ("The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy: A Presentation of Its Various Modifications and a Comparison of the Newest Skepticism with Ancient Skepticism.")

2. Cf. HPh I, 21 f.; these passages are not included in the English translation.

3. When Hegel tries to connect up freedom as the condition for philosophy with political freedom, however, his discussion of the concrete political situation in ancient Greece shows that there is a problem: "In Greece we first see real freedom flourish, but still in a restricted form, and with a limitation, since slavery was still existent, and the states were by its means conditioned" (HPh I, 122/100).

4. On the issue of the double function of skepticism in the *Phenomenology*, cf. Claesges, Ulrich, "Das Doppelgesicht des Skeptizismus in Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," in H. F. Fulda, and R. P. Horstmann, *Skeptizismus und spekulatives Denken in der Philosophie Hegels* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996), 117–134.

5. Heidegger illuminates the fact that there is no contradiction in the statement that what we need to *do* is exactly leave our ideas aside—for leaving something aside, refraining from something, is exactly an activity, but an activity we are not used to, and thus a difficult one. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1977), 190.

6. For further clarification of the *epoché* in Hegel and its similarities and differences to the phenomenological *epoché* in Husserl, cf. Kenley R. Dove, "Die Epoché der Phänomenologie des Geistes," in *Hegel-Studien* (Beiheft 11, Bonn 1974), 605–621.

7. Cf. Klaus Düsing, "Die Bedeutung des antiken Skeptizismus für Hegels Kritik der sinnlichen Gewißheit," in *Hegel-Studien*, Band 8, 119–130.

8. Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), II, 103, and *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, in *The Skeptic Way—Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. with intro. by Benson Mates (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), II, 109 f. (hereafter: OP).

9. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1010 a 12.

10. The expression "trope" is used here as a translation of Greek *tropos*, "way of reasoning." Sextus Empiricus distinguishes among ten earlier tropes that refer to matter and five later tropes that give formal rules of argumentation.

11. Cf. Hans Friedrich Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1965), 51. In Hegelian terms, one could say that we are no longer in the immediate ethical state (*unmittelbare Sittlichkeit*).

12. I would like to thank Edward S. Casey for his help with the language of this essay.

Chapter 7

The Place of Rousseau in Hegel's System



Allegra De Laurentiis

Hegel's appraisal of Rousseau's contribution to the history of philosophy and politics appears at first sight to waver between the two extremes of unfair oversimplification and excessive praise. At times, Hegel accuses Rousseau of one-sidedness, of abstractness (G.Ph., II, 129/II, 115),¹ or of understanding human society in "atomistic" terms (G.Ph., I, 358/I, 304). At other times, Rousseau is celebrated as the first thinker to have introduced the concept of will as an integral element of a theory of state-right (*Staatsrecht*), thereby disclosing for the first time the dialectical nature of human freedom (EL, § 163, Addition 1).²

A close reading of Hegel's Rousseau interpretations, especially those of the mature work, however, reveals a highly consistent thesis on the pivotal role of Rousseau's *volonté générale* in modernity's process of self-comprehension.³ Hegel sees in Rousseau's political philosophy the most forceful and objective historical embodiment of the logical difficulties encountered by natural rights theorists and contractarians in their attempts to comprehend freedom as self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*). Hegel believes that early modern and Enlightenment philosophy could not but withdraw from contradictory notions like those of autonomous subjection, voluntary submission, or compulsory freedom. The rejection of these "contradictions of the understanding," as he calls them, is epitomized already by Plato's pronouncement that "It can't be . . . that the same thing, with the same part of itself, in relation to the same, at the same time, does opposite things."⁴ The same reasoning underlies Aristotle's political argument that "free men's" rule over those like themselves can only take place in turns, the ones obeying, the others ruling.⁵ Since antiquity, in other words, it has been regarded as impos-

sible to conceive ruler and ruled as being one agent simultaneously and in the same respect.

A major feature of modern political contractarianism consisted of its deriving the practical necessity of the compact from the proto-utilitarian assumption that instrumental reason would be exercised by natural individuals who preexisted the contract.⁶ To the extent that freedom was a concern for pre-Rousseauian contractarians, they presented the (factual or hypothetical) event of the first universal agreement to exit the natural condition as marking the crossing point from an unproductive brutish freedom to a fruitful civilized subjection. But the collective entrance into political society was intended to mark another kind of boundary, one which the moderns (this time turning against Aristotle) thought to be either nonexistent or utterly fickle in the state of nature. This was the demarcation between subjection and authority, a division the modern body politic was designed to institutionalize through the general, self-interested consent of individuals to an unequal distribution of power.⁷

According to Hegel, such views were grounded in a metaphysical concept of personhood based on categories appropriate to an examination of thinghood. Foremost among the latter is the concept of “immediate” or “abstract” identity underlying physical, anthropological or social atomism. An adequate account of personhood requires rather a concept of “mediated” or “concrete” *self*-identity largely unavailable to, though often intuited by, early modern thinkers. The application of categories adequate to one ontological domain (for example, thinghood) to objects of a different domain (in our case, personhood) amounts for Hegel to the fatal error of attempting to account for an object of reason in terms of concepts of mere understanding.

Hegel therefore proposes that personhood be explained, first, in terms of a concept of mediated or *dialectical* identity, and further, in terms of a *speculative* dialectical identity. He argues that dialectical identity *tout court* can and indeed must be invoked in any coherent account of all developmental objects of thought. From mere living organisms to self-determining living organisms, our concept of their identity must entail the connotation of their internal difference. Containing, as they do, both identity and difference, they enclose, from our perspective, opposing determinations. Their concept is properly dialectical. But the explanation of personhood requires a further step. The dialectical identity of personhood is not just identity in-itself or for-us, but indicates self-identity in the emphatic sense. It is self-reflexive, speculative identity in-and-for-itself.

In the political sphere, this line of argument allows one to grasp, first, that the opposition of subjection and sovereignty is a dialectical contradiction, i.e. one that contains the notion of their identity as much as that of their distinction. *Pace* Plato and Aristotle, the existence of *one* subject-

object becomes intelligible, so that ruler and ruled can be coherently thought of as being one simultaneously and in the same respect. Second, the speculative nature of persons' identity (as opposed, for example, to the identity of personifications or role players) implies that their determinacy is essentially self-determination.

Rousseau's epoch-making contribution consists precisely in having raised to visibility, as it were, the dialectical and speculative identity of the fundamental opposition of the political sphere, that of subjection and sovereignty. Rousseau made the antinomic nature of freedom explicit in the paradoxical formulations that are the distinguishing rhetorical feature of his work. Despite what he perceives as Rousseau's lack of full awareness about the momentous character of his discovery,⁸ Hegel discerns a speculative concept of the identity of persons in Rousseau's most striking formulations, for example: that by relinquishing one's natural freedom one "remains as free as before" (CS, I/VI);⁹ that "in giving himself to all, each person gives himself to no one" (*ibid.*); that the same people are sovereign and subject to the sovereign (*ibid.*); or that it may be necessary that someone "be forced to be free" (CS, I/VII). To point out Rousseau's contradictions is, then, not to refute him, but rather to show the watershed character of his work as a turning point in the history of the consciousness of freedom.

The influence of the different stages of Rousseau's anthropological and political views on Hegel's equally evolving conceptions of personhood and statehood has been the object of few but outstanding studies.¹⁰ In the following, I do not reconstruct the influence of Rousseau on Hegel's formative years in Tuebingen and Berne. Though pervasive in Hegel's fragments entitled "*Volksreligion und Christentum*"¹¹ or in the manuscripts on "*Die Positivitaet der christlichen Religion*,"¹² Rousseau's influence at this early stage appears filtered through the selective use of his writings typical of the revolutionary circles toward which the young Hegel gravitated. The French revolutionaries and their enthusiastic German sympathizers focused on the liberal, individualistic, and contractarian elements of Rousseau's theory. They tended to characterize the right-of-state as result of, rather than ground for, the choice of free individuals;¹³ they rejected democratic representation as a betrayal of the authentic autonomy of citizens;¹⁴ finally, they identified the state's essence in one of its functions, namely that of protecting and guaranteeing the interplay of individual interests. Most of these theses, as is well known, are decisively rejected in Hegel's mature work. My study focuses on the active appropriation of the theory of *volonté générale* in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the 1821 *Philosophy of Right*, and the 1830 *Encyclopaedia Logic*.

Section one discusses the meaning and import of the notion of "political atomism." Section two delineates the logical difficulties contained in the idea of a social contract. The third section highlights the abstract character

of the contradiction between Rousseau's state-atomism and Plato's state-Parmenideanism.

The existing contributions¹⁵ to these themes all stop short of reconstructing the logical justification for endowing Rousseau's principle of the will with the conceptual primacy bestowed upon it by Hegel. But it is precisely in Hegel's works on logic that we find the explication of the speculative structure of *Selbstbestimmung*. The latter, according to Hegel, underpins the rhetorical and existential charisma of Rousseau's paradoxes.¹⁶ A reconstruction of the logical grounding of the notions of "self-determination" and "universal will" cannot be pursued in detail here. However, in the last section of this essay I give a sketch of the logical analysis of the speculative self-identity of persons, i.e. of theoretical self-knowledge and practical self-determination, contained in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (§§159–163). This logical-metaphysical analysis of personhood helps explain central paradoxes of *Du contrat social*. Hegel's judgment that a dialectical-speculative notion of personal identity is both the implicit source and the effective solution of Rousseau's paradoxes is, I argue, well taken.

Rousseau, Atomist of the Spirit

We read in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*¹⁷ that to think in atomistic terms is to obliterate internal difference, or quality, from the thinking consideration of objects. The first consequence of this obliteration is that one's thinking is led to focus exclusively on the external relations of its objects. Hegel shows that if no internal differentiation (i.e. qualitative determinacy) is discernible, objects cannot be differentiated from each other. *Ergo*, the objects of atomistic thinking are all the same. Atomism's world consists of a plurality of "indifferent" (i.e., un-differentiable) objects. This elimination of internal difference, whose result Hegel calls "absolute indifference," is the core operation of all merely quantitative considerations of things and the common feature of all categories of quantity: continuity and discreteness, number, quantum, extension and intension, finitude, and spurious infinity.

In the history of Western philosophy, atomistic thinking focused at first on the physical universe, rather than on the human-made world of *Geist*. While lecturing on pre-Socratic philosophy, Hegel comments that the principles adopted by Leucippus and Democritus in the investigation of nature were uncritically applied by the political philosophers and anthropologists of the eighteenth century to the sphere of the spirit. Hegel is explicit in referring this critical remark to Rousseau:

To Leucippus and Democritus the determinacy [of one-ness] . . . remained physical; but it also appears in the spirit. . . . In the sphere of the will the point of view may be maintained that in the state the single will is, as atom, the absolute. The more recent theories of the state . . . are of this kind. The state must rest on the general will, they say, but by this is meant the will of the individuals . . . the latter is atomistic, as in Rousseau's *Contrat social* (G.Ph., I, 358/I, 304).

The semantic core of *atomos* or *individuum* is the thought-determination of "being one," or "absolute singularity." Hegel emphasizes that neither of these notions has an empirical denotation. For example, with regards to physical atomism, Hegel rejects Aristotle's interpretation of Leucippus's atoms as being imperceptible "owing to the minuteness of their bulk."¹⁸ Rather, Leucippus's atoms are imperceptible owing to the fact that they are "thought-determinations." *Atomos*, Hegel explains, does not denote an empirically perceivable *quantum* of matter, but rather "an abstraction of thought" (*ibid.*). Atomism in modern practical philosophy extends absolute singularity to human beings, citizens or private *bourgeois*. The building blocks of the body politic are now called "individuals." But for the same reason that Leucippus's atoms cannot denote perceptible determinacies of matter, human individuals cannot denote mere creatures of nature.

In his subsequent references to Rousseau in the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel distinguishes between at least two major phases in Rousseau's thinking. While Rousseau's two *Discours* (1750 and 1755)¹⁹ are still committed to a naturalistic atomism of persons, his *Du contrat social* (published in 1762) introduces a wholly new perspective. Rousseau specifies here in what respect one can speak of individuals as foundations of the rightful state, namely as individual *wills* dialectically identified with the universal will.²⁰ Furthermore, Rousseau's attempt to distinguish an aggregate of individual wills (*volonté de tous*) from one, nondistributive, universal will (*volonté générale*) indicates a new awareness of the important logical difference between what German idealism calls *Willkuer* and *Wille*.²¹

But atomism resurfaces persistently in Rousseau's texts. In the first book of *Du contrat social*, for example, we find it stated at first that the sovereign people can never have an interest differing from that of the subjects who compose it.²² Shortly thereafter, however, Rousseau affirms that the subjects may well have interests at variance with that of the sovereign.²³ Rousseau's denial of this symmetry stems from his intuition of the fundamentally different, distributive vs. nondistributive, meanings of the universal terms involved. Precisely the ambiguities of Rousseau's *volonté*, his insistence upon and inconsistent use of the distinction between *volonté de tous* and

volonté générale, indicate that the two meanings of “will” are simultaneously present to his mind. Though sharing in much of the “abstractions” of modern political philosophy (those abstractions whose abrupt political actualization Hegel famously blamed for the horrors of the revolutionary Terror),²⁴ Rousseau still lay the foundation for a justification of state authority rooted in an *implicitly* dialectical and speculative concept of will.

In the lectures on French philosophy, Hegel maintains that one can discern in *Du contrat social* a concept of human individuality which, despite its originally quantitative (atomistic) characterization, does contain an implicitly qualitative connotation. Rousseau’s masterpiece famously begins by stating, without argument, that “man is born free” (CS, I/I). It goes on to maintain that “Renouncing one’s liberty . . . is incompatible with the nature of man” (CS, I/IV). According to Hegel, this amounts to attributing a qualitative determinacy to human beings, a quality called “natural freedom” for which they are, paradoxically, not responsible:

[Rousseau] asked after the absolute justification of [the state]: what is the foundation of the state? . . . To the above question he answered that man [*der Mensch*] has free will, because freedom is the quality [*das Qualitative*] of being human (G.Ph., III, 306/III, 401).

The pivotal role of “freedom” in the overall argument of *Du contrat social* marks out Rousseau’s work as the first where subjectivity in its individual form is recognized as central to a philosophical account of right. But by conceiving freedom as natural in origin, Rousseau betrays a merely formal understanding of subjectivity. Freedom is reduced to each man’s activity of free choice. Even the civil freedom attained under the social contract is the result of individual free choice. Rousseau does not grasp subjectivity (except intuitively) as the object or “content” of the history of *Geist*. But subjectivity as a mere form of human thinking and acting is *Willkuer*, while subjectivity as content of human thinking and acting is (rational) *Wille*. Hegel writes:

These principles [of *Du contrat social*,] thus abstractly stated, we must allow to be correct, yet the ambiguity in them soon begins to be felt. Man is free, this is certainly the substantial nature of man; and not only is this liberty not relinquished in the state, but it is actually in the state that it is first constituted. The freedom of nature, the disposition to freedom, is not actual freedom; for the

state for the first time is the actualization of freedom (G.Ph., III, 307/III, 401–402).

The abrupt, dogmatic beginning of Rousseau's main work ("Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains") issues from his positing "freedom" as a natural, inborn quality of human individuals. On the one hand, the blunt introduction of this common "natural quality" indicates Rousseau's dissatisfaction with his own atomistic premises. On the other hand, his focus on man's "first nature" leads him to mistake an act of determination (*Bestimmung*) for a factual determinacy (*Bestimmtheit*), thereby treating an internal *differentia* as if it were an external property. Internal or self-differentiation is a notion not available to the purely quantitative language of atomism. Freedom, however, is neither a natural nor an artificial (conventional) determinacy, but an act of self-determination.²⁵

The further development of *Du contrat social* shows Rousseau's progressive abandonment of the initial dogma. While in the opening chapters (as in the earlier *Discours*) man's entering the realm of spirit is still described as a fall from nature's grace, a relinquishing of freedom, in the following chapters the realm of the spirit is presented as the place where man becomes liberated from that freedom, i.e., from animal existence. The new freedom is the result of the negation of the first. Hegel points out that what Rousseau at the beginning of the treatise calls emphatically "natural freedom" he subsequently dilutes to "natural independence." The term "freedom" is ultimately reserved to refer to *necessitation by self-imposed law*: "For to be driven by appetite alone is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom" (CS, I/VIII).

The shift from the first to the second meaning of freedom is subtle but not slight. It has crucial philosophic consequences. It amounts, Hegel believes, to a true reshaping of Rousseau's cognizance of what is implied in the concept of free will and consequently in the concept of right.

The Faulty Logic of Contractarian Freedom

While Rousseau's reflections on what justifies the modern state's authority contain an implicit notion of the dialectical and speculative nature of freedom, his arguments fall back to the level of enlightened ratiocination when answering the question that prompted his own investigation, namely: how to find a

form of association which defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and by means of

which each one, while uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before (CS, I/VI).

Rousseau's solution to the problem of freedom under authority, Hegel comments, supposedly lies in the closing of a contract, a conscious and unanimous but contingent agreement of individual wills both to obey unconditionally the "common force" and to retain their previous, i.e. natural, freedom. In the end, the sovereign will or right-of-state, spirit's necessary shape, is said to result from an opportune covenant among otherwise "indifferent" wills.

Rousseau, as already mentioned, identifies here the notion of free will with that of voluntary choice. The association is a compromise among previously isolated individuals who are now motivated by what they perceive (rightly or wrongly) to be their best private interest. They, and Rousseau with them, misconstrue their arbitrary common choice as universal freedom. In this conception, "freedom" is metaphysically and logically underdetermined. Witness Rousseau's own extraordinary comment at the closing of Book I, Chapter VIII: "But I have already said too much on this subject, and the philosophical meaning of the word *liberty* is not my subject here."

Hegel's criticism is implicitly twofold. First, Rousseau's concept of free will lacks the fundamental Aristotelian distinction between *dynamis* and *energeia*. Second, Rousseau fails to grasp that the attainment of freedom is the actualization of an intrinsic end (an Aristotelian *entelecheia*) and not just of an extrinsic goal.²⁶

According to this criticism, Rousseau attributes the same level of "actuality" to natural and postcontractual freedom. Natural freedom, however, can mean at best a disposition to be free, one against whose actualization well-known Hobbesian obstacles are constantly and successfully at work. Rousseau, therefore, can only maintain against his own better judgment that subjection to the general will leaves individuals "as free as before." Freedom under contractarian conditions is rather the *first* actualization of our disposition to freedom. Far from containing a guarantee of the old existence, it signals the establishment of a wholly new one. When individual wills join to form the universal will, they do not remain absolute or "as free as before." This is the reason why, as Rousseau himself goes on to contend, *volonté de tous* and *volonté générale* do not coincide, and their respective embodiments stand in an asymmetric relation with each other. While the sovereign "has no need to offer a guarantee to its subjects," Rousseau assures us, it certainly must "find ways of being assured of the subjects' fidelity" (CS, I/VII). This genuine insight into the difference of universal and aggregate will, Hegel maintains, should have prompted Rousseau to abandon a theory of the right-of-state as association (*Vereinigung*) of formerly free individuals: "The state is

not such an association decided upon by the arbitrary will of individuals" (G.Ph., III, 307-308/III, 402).

Besides conflating a natural disposition to freedom with its political actualization, Rousseau also neglects to distinguish between the actualization of external and internal goals. If freedom of the will is determination by self-imposed law, then its attainment is the actualization of a goal intrinsic to the will. Freedom consists of the human will's positing itself as its own object of desire, of knowledge, and of action (Ph.R., §7).²⁷ A free will is one that wills its own freedom (Ph.R., §27)²⁸ and not merely external objectives, like the avoidance of danger, the achievement of peaceful comfort, or the protection of one's private interest. After all, Rousseau himself exclaims in *Du contrat social*: "A tranquil life is also had in dungeons; is that enough to make them desirable?" (CS, I/IV). Rousseau proclaims also that under conditions of civil freedom individuals may have to "be forced to be free" (CS, I/VII). In this formulation, as countless critics have pointed out, the contradiction of civil freedom may seem insurmountable. Indeed, if freedom were an external goal of human individuals, its attainment could only be a matter of either accident or outer compulsion. But whatever else may be attained under accidental circumstances or alien coercion, it will not be self-determination. In order to allow for a solution, the paradox of civil freedom should have been given a reflexive formulation, for example: that it is necessary for individuals to "force themselves to be free." Freedom under rule, in other words, must consist of the externalization of an internal principle. It cannot be the mechanical result of compact and compromise suggested by instrumental ratiocination to alleviate the evils of a life solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

Rousseau, Nemesis of Plato

For the purpose of comparing ancient and modern forms of the objective spirit, Hegel comments on Rousseau's *volonté* in the lecture on Plato's *Republic*. Here he emphasizes the connotation of *Willkuer* inherent to *volonté de tous* in order to contrast it with Plato's altogether anti-individualistic theory of the just *polis*.

Hegel argues that the "extreme" and "completely one-sided" (G.Ph., II, 129/II, 115) Rousseauian conception of the individual will as foundation of state-right is the abstract antipode to Plato's understanding of the just state. To be sure, in the *Republic* the legitimacy of subjective interests and motives or of the "conscious free will of the individuals" (*ibid.*), far from being simply ignored, is rather vigorously opposed. Plato's "purely substantial state" (R.Ph., §185 Remark) is meant as a bulwark against the "principle of

subjective freedom” in its manifestations as private possession, familial privacy, social mobility, and so forth. “Subjective freedom” having first been raised as a question and indicated as a possibility by Socrates (*G.Ph.*, II, 29/II, 114) had in the meantime “forced its way into Greek ethical life” (*R.Ph.*, §185, Remark), for example, in form of the assertion of political or economic interests of groups and individuals. Though Plato is the main antagonist of this first awakening of particular wills, Hegel reminds us that “the want of subjectivity is really the want of the Greek ethical Idea” in general (*G.Ph.*, II, 129/II, 114).

At the opposite extreme stands the “ethical Idea” of the moderns exalting the individuality of the will as *fundamentum inconcussum* of the state. In this comparison, Hegel looks favorably upon the modern conception of the will: though it is an “abstraction,” he writes, it still marks “the great elevation of the modern world above the old” (*G.Ph.*, II, 128/II, 113). Hegel chooses Rousseau as the champion of this abstract, one-sided, reckless, and yet superior antithesis to Platonism:

The opposite to Plato’s principle is the principle of the conscious free will of individuals, which in later times has been raised to prominence especially by Rousseau: [namely] that the arbitrary choice of the individual as individual . . . is necessary. In this the principle has been carried to its direct extreme, and has emerged in its utter one-sidedness (*G.Ph.*, II, 129/II, 115).

In his closing remarks on the *Republic*, Hegel indicates that there is an alternative to the abstract opposition of ancient and modern conceptions of state-right and freedom. This alternative emerges from a grasp of the historical process by which subjectivity universalizes itself. This is the process wherein is born a right to subjectivity. In the development called modernity, subjectivity is made into a principle. It becomes the substance of the state. In the modern state’s institutions, individuals recognize their will. They know the universal will to be a product of their own making. This recognition could not take place in Plato’s state, where the lower caste had to accept an alien will as the universal.

The paradoxes in which Rousseau attempts to capture modern freedom make the historical novelty of his conception unmistakable. For Hegel, freedom can be the substance of the state only where the state is the embodiment of thinking proper, i.e. of self-consciousness as self-cognition and self-will.²⁹ In its theoretical mode, consciousness that has itself as its content is self-knowledge. In its practical mode, consciousness that has itself as its content is freedom. In this condition, self-consciousness can be said for the

first time to be truly “at home with itself in its other” (*EL*, §161, Add.). To grasp this is to attain the concept of the Concept, or of free personhood.

The Logic of Free Personhood

In the last section of the Doctrine of Essence (*EL*, §159), Hegel remarks on the difficulties one encounters in making the transition from thinking in terms of categories of Being and Essence to thinking in terms of categories of the Concept. One has to advance, for example, from the concept of actuality to that of actualized thought, or from the notions of blind causality and reciprocal action to the idea of purposeful activity. One is expected to abandon inveterate metaphysical prejudices and to grasp that the thoughtless and the thoughtful, immediate being and mediated essence, necessity and freedom, share an identical ground—are “moments” of a differentiated unit called “the Concept” (*der Begriff*).³⁰ Intuitively, it is not difficult to envisage how Rousseau’s concept of freedom as self-imposed necessity may qualify in Hegel’s eyes as belonging to the sphere of the Concept. The following brief reconstruction of Hegel’s analysis of the Concept lends support to this intuition. *Der Begriff* contains the anatomy of Hegel’s notion of subjectivity as personhood. Consequently, the Concept is also the key to an adequate understanding of Hegel’s complex interpretation and assessment of Rousseau’s role in the history of philosophy.

In the Introduction, I have claimed that Hegel’s criticism of early modern philosophy is based on the fundamental thesis that categories appropriate to an investigation of objects of the understanding are insufficient to account for objects of reason. I have indicated that an instance of categorical differentiation that Hegel deems necessary in moving from “Objective Logic” (the Doctrines of Being and of Essence) to “Subjective Logic” (the Doctrine of the Concept) is the distinction between “immediate” or “abstract” identity and “mediated” or “concrete” self-identity. The titles of the two volumes of the *Greater Logic* (titles suppressed in the *Encyclopaedia*), namely “Objective Logic” and “Subjective Logic,” are a useful reminder of the radical novelty represented by the Doctrine of the Concept in the systematic development of this work. Although the whole of the *Logic* has the movement of thinking³¹ for its content, the thought-contents analyzed in the Objective Logic refer to what is other than thought. In the Subjective Logic, by contrast, the content of thought is explicitly thought itself. This is why in the *Greater Logic* the title “Doctrine of the Concept” is given as an alternative equivalent to that of “Subjective Logic.” While being is the object of thinking in the Doctrine of Being, and essence, in the Doctrine of Essence, the Concept

is both the object and subject of its doctrine because it is thought alone that can think itself. In the logic of the Concept, form and content coincide.³² Being its own object, thinking cannot but give itself its own determinations.

The laconic main text of the opening sections of the Doctrine of the Concept provides us with a concise outline of the internal logic of its subject matter. In the following, I give a brief characterization of three features I call the “internal determination,” “negativity,” and “three-dimensionality” of the Concept.

The Concept's Internal Determination

Given the self-reflexive character of thought thinking itself, the Doctrine of the Concept displays the logic of properly speculative categories.³³ While categories of Being and Essence are merely determinate, those of the Concept must be regarded as self-determining. The opening line of the logic of the Concept states this quite forcefully: “As the *substantial might which is for itself* the Concept is what is *free*; . . . in its identity with itself it is what is *in and for itself determinate*” (EL, §160). The Concept is “what is *free*” in the sense that and insofar as it is what it determines itself to be.

The notions analyzed under “Being” and “Essence” acquire their meanings through an external reflection exercised upon their referents, while those analyzed under the heading “the Concept” mean what they mean through self-reference. All the categories of the Concept share this speculative character. The difference between the meanings of “human being” and “person,” for example, can be understood in the light of this distinction. While the first is defined by the phenomenological or scientific observation made by thinkers, the second can only result from thinkers’ self-definition.

At the methodological level, the distinction between merely determinate and self-determining concepts is reflected in the difference between *dialectical* and *speculative-dialectical* thinking. While the dialectic of thinking³⁴ organizes the whole of the *Logic*, yet the concepts we encounter in Being and Essence are objects of a dialectical process that is not yet properly speculative. Again, while the logic of the “live body” can be meaningfully analyzed in categories of Being,³⁵ the logic of “personhood” must be explained in categories of the Concept:

[W]hen *singularity* is understood as I, when *personhood* itself—not an empirical I, a *particular* personality—is meant, . . . then what is at issue is *pure*—i.e., *inwardly universal*—personhood; and this is a thought and pertains only to thinking (EL, §63, Remark).

The reason why personhood can only emerge at the speculative level of the Concept is that, contrary to some of its cognates (for example “personification”)

the concept of personhood implies those of self-knowledge and self-determination. Where these are either inconceivable or mere *desiderata*, universal personhood is unknown:

[T]he gods of the Ancients were . . . regarded as personal, of course; but the personhood of Zeus, or of Apollo and of the others, is not an actual personhood . . . these gods are merely personifications; they do not *know themselves* as such; they are only *known about* instead (EL, §147, Addition).³⁶

The same applies, as we are told repeatedly in the *Philosophy of Right*,³⁷ to ancient conceptions of gods' human counterparts. Ancient people knew themselves in their external determinacies or personifications as *hellenoi*, masters, wives, slaves, Thebans, Athenians, barbarians, or kings. The existence of persons, however, is the result of subjects' internal determination, i.e., their self-knowledge as "in and for themselves determinate" or as "what is free" (EL, §160).

The Concept's Negativity

Since *omnis determinatio est negatio*, then all self-determination must be self-negation. Indeed, another way of explaining the fundamental distinction between merely determinate concepts and the self-determining Concept is to reflect on the ways in which concepts are said by Hegel to result from the negation of others.³⁸

In the Doctrines of Being and Essence, concepts are not engendered by the simple negation of others, but by the dialectical process of negating the *negative relationship* between previous concepts. Becoming, for example, cannot be grasped as the negation of nothing or as the double negation of being. The full meaning of becoming is only grasped as negation of the alleged mutual exclusion of being and nothing. Becoming is their ground. As such, it is of course a dialectical concept. Still, becoming is not a *speculative* dialectical concept. A concept is properly speculative, as mentioned before, if its meaning is self-referential. Self-reference, in turn, implies internal differentiation of what is self-identical. Accordingly, speculative concepts can be said to include "negativity" in themselves: they denote both themselves and also an other than themselves. Self-consciousness is one such concept. As already stated in the *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness must be grasped as internal differentiation of one-and-the-same consciousness into a subject and its object. In its mode as self-consciousness, "consciousness makes a distinction, but one which at the same time is for consciousness *not* a distinction" (Ph., 104). A properly speculative concept, then, does not only result from

the negation of a negative relation between other concepts, but from the negation of a negative relation intrinsic to it. It results from the negation of its own negativity.

The dialectical movement generated by thinking the concept of thinking itself (*der Begriff*) yields once again a major feature of “personhood.” As reflected (or grasped) self-consciousness consists of the activity of negating and conserving the negativity intrinsic to it, so also the concept of the Concept sublates its own negativity. In both processes, the end result is not simply a given identity but a freely posited self-identity. Hegel calls a reflected self-conscious being who posits its own identity a person.

The Three Dimensions of the Concept

In §163 Hegel introduces yet another aspect by which the subject matter of the Doctrine of the Concept differs from that of other parts of the *Logic*:

The *Concept* as such contains the moment of *universality*, as free equality with itself in its determinacy; it contains the moment of *particularity*, or of the determinacy in which the Universal remains serenely equal to itself; and it contains the moment of *singularity*, as the inward reflection of the determinacies of universality and particularity. This negative unity with itself is what is *in and for itself determined*, and at the same time identical with itself or universal (EL, §163).³⁹

This definition needs closer examination:

(a) “The *Concept* as such contains the moment of *universality*, as free equality with itself in its determinacy.” The universality of the Concept is defined here by recourse to the notion of the Concept’s self-identity and the latter is qualified as “free.” This is best explained by recalling Hegel’s definitions of the “I” at different levels of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

At the level of sense-certainty, “I” means an empty abstraction akin to all other merely sensed certainties: “The ‘I’ is *merely* universal like ‘Now’, ‘Here’ or ‘This’ in general” (*Ph.*, 62, my emphasis). It is an abstract immediacy whose universality is akin to the “universal” validity of mere tautologies or of meaningless utterances.

At the stage of self-consciousness, by contrast, the definition of the “I” centers around its being an activity and product of mediation. Here Hegel introduces the concept of the Concept:

If we give the name of *Concept*⁴⁰ to the movement of knowing, and the name of *object* to knowing as a passive unity, or as the ‘I’,

then we see that not only for us, but for knowing itself, the object corresponds to the *Concept*. . . . [I]t is clear that [in self-consciousness] being-in-itself and being-for-an-other are one and the same. . . . [T]he 'I' is the *content* of the connection and the connecting itself (*Ph.*, 104).

The identity of a self-conscious "I" is neither sensed nor intuited but rather constituted by a process of mediation. The universality of the "I" in self-consciousness is more concrete than in sense-certainty, since it now includes comparison and differentiation.

Finally, in the section on Absolute Knowing, Hegel explicitly refers to the "I" as self-consciousness grasping itself:

The nature, moments and movement of this knowing have, then, shown themselves to be such that this knowing is a pure *being-for-self* of self-consciousness; it is 'I', that is *this* and no other 'I', and which is no less a *mediated* or superseded *universal* 'I' (*Ph.*, 486).

The identity of the "I" is now not only mediated, but absolutely mediated. Something enjoys a "mediated" self-identity if it is the result of a process of mediation with an other. "Absolutely mediated" self-identity results from a further process: mediation with oneself. While, for example, our identifying a human being just requires their identity to be a "mediated" one, our identifying a person is predicated upon their identifying themselves as such. The *Concept's* identity as described in the *Logic* is of this latter kind.

The *Concept's* absolute mediation with itself is what justifies Hegel in §163 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* in equating its "universality" (*das wahrhaft Allgemeine*) with its free self-identity. Universality, of course, must be clearly distinguished from mere "generality" (*das bloss Gemeinschaftliche*). We know already from the *Phenomenology* that the "I" of self-consciousness is not a receptacle for common features of a plurality of "Is."⁴¹ It signifies rather the speculative identity of the object meant by "I" with the subject meaning it. Interpreting the *Concept's* identity as mere generality "is the way in which the understanding apprehends the *Concept*" (*EL*, §163, Addition). When the understanding defines personhood, it merely refers to that which all humans appear to have in common, from featherless bipedality to common interest. When defining the general will, understanding determines it as "will of all" rather than as universal will. It is, then, the understanding and not dialectical reason that prompts Rousseau to write: "the will of all . . . is merely the sum of private wills. But remove from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel each other out, and what remains . . . is the general will" (*CS*, II/III).

(b) “[The *Concept* as such] contains the moment of *particularity*, or of the determinacy in which the Universal remains serenely equal to itself.” The particularity of the Concept consists precisely of its being determined as universal. This determinacy, as we already know, does not come about through an extrinsic process: the Concept is particular “in the sense that it is inwardly universal” (*EL*, §164). In other words, it is the particular nature of the Concept that it is neither just the result of causal processes (*Kausalitaet*) nor just of (natural or social) interaction (*Gemeinschaft* or *Wechselwirkung*).⁴² The Concept’s “particularity,” rather, results from a process intrinsic to it, namely the process by which it specifies itself as universal.⁴³

The Concept can be called a substance if the qualification is added that its properties are not external accidents, but rather self-attributions. This kind of substance with these kinds of properties is, then, better termed a “subject” with “activities.”

(c) “[The Concept] contains the moment of *singularity*, as the inward reflection of the determinacies of universality and particularity.” The Concept is singular because it is an absolute (i.e., self-mediated) unit of its other two moments. In the *Philosophy of Right*, the Concept is referred to as “the will,” and its being *individual* will is defined as the unity of the will’s abstract universality and particularity. In determining (“particularizing”) itself as universal, the subject of free will “knows . . . [this determinacy] as something which is its own . . . and in which it is confined only because it has put itself in it. This is the freedom of the will and it constitutes the concept . . . of the will” (*Ph.R.*, §7).

Everything that is, is a singular thing, whether it is mere being or the essence of some other thing (e.g., a force behind a phenomenon). The Concept is no exception: it too must have a singular existence in order to be anything at all. But its existence results from internal determination (“inward reflection”). In explaining the practical dimension of the Concept in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel states: “the will is not something . . . prior to its determining itself” (*ibid.*). The Concept, then, must be understood as singular subject, or individual, producing and conditioning itself: “the singularity of the Concept is strictly *what is effective* [*schlechthin das Wirkende*]-and of course it no longer works like a *cause*, with the semblance of producing something else: rather [it is] what produces *itself* [*das Wirkende seiner selbst*]” (*EL*, §163, Remark.).

Conclusion

Since it results from the historical process leading to speculative thinking, the Concept has not been known from the dawn of civilization. Personhood “is a thought and pertains only to thinking” (*EL*, §63, Remark). It is a

comparatively late product in the history of thinking: “[I]n its true and comprehensive significance the universal is a thought that took millennia to enter into men’s consciousness” (*EL*, §163, Addition 1). The ancient world lacked this thought altogether: “The Greeks, though otherwise so highly cultivated, did not know God, or even man, in their true universality” (*ibid.*) The ancients’ general recognition of a right to enslavement is the most striking sign of their general unawareness that the concept of the will is its freedom or, to say the same thing differently, that self-knowing and self-willing individuality is the concept of “man.” Thus, Hegel comments in the *Philosophy of Right*:

Man, pursuant to his *immediate* existence . . . is something natural . . . It is only through the development of his own body and mind, essentially through his self-consciousness’s apprehension of itself as free, that he takes possession of himself and becomes his own property and no one else’s. This . . . is the translation into actuality of what one is according to one’s concept (*Ph.R.*, §57, Remark).

The history of the species is a history of the gradual recognition of “itself as free.” The universal dimension of human individuality (“what one is according to one’s concept”) dawned abstractly in the juridical notion of the legal equality of all citizens of Rome. It then resurfaced, enriched by an inward (“moral”) dimension, in the early Christian notion of the equally infinite, intrinsic worth of every human individual as God’s creature. In modernity, the concrete universality of individuals emerges in the notion of a universal right of subjectivity: the self-recognition of the Concept as free. From Hegel’s perspective, early modern debates about notions of individual autonomy are to be understood as attempts to establish or negate the intelligibility of the speculative nature of persons. It is Rousseau’s distinction to have exhibited for the first time the rational intelligibility of the speculative Concept in its form as will, “the one [concept] into which the Understanding declines to advance, for it is precisely the concept which it persists in calling the inconceivable” (*Ph.R.*, §7).

Notes

1. *Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie* (abbreviated as *G.Ph.*) parts I–III, *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 18–20 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971). The translations are from E. S. Haldane, *Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. I–III (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1974). I have occasionally modified Haldane’s

translation when comparison with the German text required it. In the citations, the first pair of numbers refers to part and page of the Suhrkamp edition, the second pair to the Humanities edition.

2. *Encyclopaedia Logic* (abbreviated as *EL*). In the following, I quote from *Enzyklopaedie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), part one: *Die Wissenschaft der Logik. Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970).

3. A radical shift in Hegel's early conception of the nature of the modern state is already present in the 1800–1802 tract “*Die Verfassung Deutschlands*” in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971). The essence of the modern state is identified here in a “common power” directed inwardly and outwardly, while a shared language, custom, and ethicality may well be missing from the modern state. The shift from empirical criteria like language, religious faith, or shared customs to the criterion of a common power with strong teleological connotations marks Hegel's first appropriation of *volonté générale* as integral to modern statehood.

4. *Republic*, book IV, 439b. See also 430b–431, 436c, 437.

5. *Politics*, book III, chapter IV.

6. Cf. for example *Leviathan*, chapters XIII and XIV.

7. Typical, though not unique, in this regard is Locke's “tacit agreement” to overthrow natural limitations to private possession: “[I]t is plain that men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth, they having, by a tacit and voluntary consent, found out a way how a man may fairly possess more land than he himself can use the product of. . . .” *Second Treatise of Government*, §50. Cf. also §§45–49.

8. This is the kind of “discovery” that can equally be termed “invention” as in J. Schneewind's *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.) The discovery of autonomy cannot be the uncovering of an already actual state of affairs and is therefore, at the same time, invention.

9. *Du contrat social; ou, principes du droit politique* (1762). (Abbreviated as *CS*.) *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. III (Dijon: Gallimard, 1964). The translated quotations are from *J.-J. Rousseau. The Basic Political Writings*, trans. D. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). In the citations, the first Roman numeral refers to the book, the second to the chapter of the original edition.

10. Biographical information as well as a philosophical assessment of such influence is found first of all in such classics as K. Rosenkranz's *Hegel's Leben* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1844) and F. Rosenzweig's *Hegel und der Staat* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1920). In addition, I found the following two studies very helpful: Helmut Walther Brann, *Rousseaus Einfluss auf die Hegelsche Staatsphilosophie in ihrer Entwicklung und Vollendung* (Ph.D. diss. Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitaet, 1926). Marco De Angelis, *Die Rolle des Einflusses von J.-J. Rousseau auf die Herausbildung von Hegels Jugendidéal* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995).

11. *Fragmente ueber Volksreligion und Christentum* (1793–1794.) *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 1.

12. *Die Positivitaet der christlichen Religion* (1795/1796). *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 1, no. 13. This, of course, was an ideologically motivated misreading of very explicit claims in *Du contrat social*. Already in its opening chapter we find the

statement: "But the social order is a sacred right which serves as a foundation for all other rights" (CS, I/I).

14. Thereby adhering at least to the letter of *Du contrat social*: "Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated. It consists essentially of the general will, and will cannot be represented" (CS, III/XV).

15. Among these I am most indebted to Ruediger Bubner's *Drei Studien zur politischen Philosophie*, (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999), and to Teresa Tonchia's *Libertà nello stato. Riflessioni sulla libertà politica in Rousseau, Hegel e Marx* (Trieste: Proxima Scientific Press, 1990).

16. The work of Pierre Burgelin *La philosophie de l'existence de J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952) represents an existentialist attempt to render Rousseau's apparent incongruities consistent with an assumed underlying unity of his thought. The early study of Jean Starobinski *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris: Plon, 1957) leads most of Rousseau's philosophic ambiguities or alleged self-contradictions back to the philosopher's psychological conflicts.

17. *EL*, §98. Cf. also the *Greater Logic* (GL), "Objective Logic," Quality, Ch. 3, B, b and Quantity, Ch. 1, A. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1997).

18. Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, I, 8, 325 a 30.

19. J.-J. Rousseau, *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750). *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité* (1755). *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. III.

20. Hegel's biographer, Karl Rosenkranz, appears to have read Rousseau precisely in the one-sided way that Hegel criticizes. In his Diderot biography (*Diderot's Leben und Werke*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866) Rosenkranz describes Rousseau's individual as a creature of natural and erratic subjectivism, therefore incapable of self-determination. He then goes on to maintain that Rousseau advocated the sovereignty of every individual, as opposed to that of all individuals, in the political sphere.

21. That Rousseau does not remain faithful to this all-important distinction is Hegel's main criticism in *EL*, §163 Addition, discussed below.

22. "Now, the sovereign people, having no existence outside that of the individuals who compose it, has, and can have, no interest at variance with theirs. Consequently, the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, since it is impossible that the body should wish to injure all its members, nor . . . can it injure any single individual. The sovereign, by merely existing, is always what it should be" (CS, I/VII).

23. "But the same does not hold true of the relation of subject to sovereign. In spite of common interest, there can be no guarantee that the subject will observe his duty to the sovereign unless means are found to ensure his loyalty" (CS, I/VII).

24. *Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, ch. VI, B, III. In the following, I quote this work (abbreviated as *Ph*) from: *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

25. Hegel's "self-differentiation" as ground of the actualization of freedom functions as the *definiens* of humanity in Marx's and Engels's early outline of historical materialism: "Man can be distinguished from the animal by consciousness, religion, or anything else you please. He begins to distinguish himself from the animal the

moment he begins to *produce* his means of subsistence . . . [his] *mode of life*." *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, ed. L. H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 107.

26. Cf. *Philosophy of Right*, §7 and Remark: free will is the "ultimate spring of all activity, life and consciousness."

27. "It is the task of logic as purely speculative philosophy to prove and explain further this innermost secret of speculation, of infinity as negativity relating itself to itself, this ultimate spring of all activity, life and consciousness" (*Ph.R.*, §7 Remark).

28. "The absolute goal . . . of free mind . . . is to make its freedom its object. . . . The [provisionally abstract] definition of the concept of the will . . . is 'the free will which wills the free will'" (*Ph.R.*, §27).

29. On cognition and will as moments of thought cf. *EL*, §§1–18 and 223–234; *GL*, "Subjective Logic," The Idea, Ch. 2, A and B.

30. I follow the usage of translating *der Begriff* as a technical term from the *Logic* with "the Concept." I use lower case "concept(s)" in all other instances.

31. More precisely, "thinking proper." On Hegel's conception of thinking in general and thinking proper see the Introduction and the Preliminary Conception to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, in particular §§2 and 7.

32. This is Hegel's version of Aristotle's determination of "mind" as "form of forms." Cf. *De Anima*, 432 a 1–2: "It follows that the soul is analogous to the hand; for as the hand is a tool of tools, so thought is the form of forms." Both hand and mind "grasp" contents of their own making.

33. Strictly speaking, formal, dialectical, and speculative "moments" are omnipresent within the *Logic*. Nonetheless, each predominates methodologically in its respective Doctrines. In Hegel's words: "With regards to its form, the *logical* has three sides: (a) *the side of abstraction or of the understanding*, (b) *the dialectical or negatively rational side*, (c) *the speculative or positively rational one*" (*EL*, §79); and: "The *Logic* is a "doctrine of thought: I. In its *immediacy*. . . II. In its *reflection*. . . III. In its *being-returned-into-itself*. . ." (*EL*, §83).

34. See notes 31 and 33.

35. As Hegel indeed does in *EL*, §91 Addition, where body is determined as "reality of the soul."

36. To avoid possible psychologistic misunderstandings, I have replaced "personality" with "personhood" in this and the preceding quotation from Geraets, Harris, and Suchting's translation.

37. Cf. Preface; §124 Remark; §163 Addition 1; §185 and Remark; §206 Remark.

38. A detailed treatment of negation and negativity in the *Logic* is in Dieter Henrich's "*Hegels Grundoperation. Eine Einleitung in die 'Wissenschaft der Logik'*." In: *Der Idealismus. Festschrift fuer Werner Marx zum 65. Geburtstag* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1976).

39. On the often neglected distinction of "particular" from "singular," and of "singular" in general from "individual" in Hegel's thought, see Geraets, Suchting and Harris's Introduction to *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, XIX and XXX.

40. Miller: "Notion."

41. For an interpretation differing from mine, see (among others) Allen Wood: "one 'moment' of the will . . . is the moment of 'universality', in which I identify myself with what is common to all beings capable of calling themselves 'I.'" A. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18.

42. The distinction between nonspeculative categories like causality or reciprocity and speculative ones like self-determination is essential in Hegel's determination of subjectivity. He explicitly states in *EL*, §155 ff. that reciprocal action is barely sufficient to explain the coordination of organs in the living organism. It thoroughly fails as ground of explanation of forms of the spirit. Causality and its "proximate truth" (reciprocal action) are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the explanation of subjectivity: "reciprocal action . . . stands on the threshold of the Concept . . . but . . . instead of being an equivalent of the Concept, [it] still requires to be comprehended." This is why to state, as is sometimes done in contemporary Hegel interpretations, that the "self" results from interaction with other "selves" is to beg the question.

43. The historico-materialistic version of this concept of universality is formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1844 manuscript on "Alienated Labor" as follows: "Man is a species-being not only in that he practically and theoretically makes his own species . . . his object, but also and this is only another expression for the same thing in that . . . he considers himself to be a *universal* and consequently free being." *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, 62.

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Chapter 8

Hegel Between Spinoza and Derrida



Merold Westphal

In a famous postcard to Overbeck, Nietzsche confessed to being “utterly amazed, utterly enchanted” to discover that he had a precursor in Spinoza.

Not only is his over-all tendency like mine—making knowledge the *most powerful* affect—but in five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself; this most unusual and loneliest thinker is closest to me precisely in these matters: he denies the freedom of the will, teleology, the moral world order, the unegoistic, and evil . . . my lonesomeness . . . is now at least a twosomeness. Strange.¹

Nietzsche was not the first German to embrace Spinoza. When Jacobi touched off the *Pantheismusstreit* by announcing that Lessing had been a Spinozist, he little foresaw the consequences. As Beiser puts it,

The first and most visible effect of the controversy was the remarkable rise in the fortunes of Spinozism in Germany. Nearly all the major figures of the classical *Goethezeit*—Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin, Herder, F. Schlegel, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Schelling—became Spinoza enthusiasts in the wake of the controversy. Apparently overnight, Spinoza’s reputation changed from a devil to a saint. The scapegoat of the intellectual establishment in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century became its hero in the last quarter. Thanks to the controversy, pantheism became, as Heine later put it, “the unofficial religion of Germany.”²

Heine indeed had written, “Germany is now the fertile soil of pantheism. This is the religion of our greatest thinkers, of our best artists, and in Germany

deism³ . . . was long ago theoretically destroyed . . . pantheism is the open secret of Germany. . . . Pantheism is the occult religion of Germany. . . .⁴

It is Hegel, of course, who interests us here. His early and decisive break with theism came in correspondence with Schelling and Hölderlin, who were reading Fichte's 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* as Spinozism on a Kantian foundation.⁵ He later professes his own Spinozism in bold terms. "You are either a Spinozist or not a philosopher at all" and "It is therefore worthy of note that thought must *begin* by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential *commencement* of all Philosophy. For as we saw above, when man *begins* to philosophize, the soul must *commence* by bathing in this ether of the One Substance in which all that man has held as true has disappeared" (*H&S*, 283, 257, emphasis added).⁶

Hegel writes as if to say to Heine, "Yes, indeed. Count me among the faithful." He even tells us proudly that he played a small part in bringing out the Paulus edition of Spinoza's works (*H&S*, 256; cf. *LHP*, 151 n.134). But since Hegel is, well, an Hegelian and not a Cartesian foundationalist (even if he describes Spinozism as philosophy's "absolute foundation" (*Grundlage*, *H&S*, 258), placing Spinoza at the *beginning* or the *commencement* of philosophy is a bit of a left-handed compliment. What comes first is abstract and inadequate by itself and gains its truth only when it is *aufgehoben* in that which comes later. Need one mention the fate of "Being" in the *Logic* or "Sense Certainty" in the *Phenomenology*?

Like Hegel, Spinoza is always a theologian, but in two ways. First, in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Spinoza is a kind of liberation theologian, seeking to free humankind from political and ecclesiastical structures he finds to be oppressive. Then, in the *Ethics*, he becomes an onto-theologian. It may be, as Heidegger complains, that we "can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god [of philosophy]. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god."⁷ But Spinoza insists on calling his Absolute Substance God, not only because it is a metaphysical first principle but also because human happiness in its highest form is essentially linked to it, no longer as political freedom but as personal freedom from the power of the passions. The God of the *Ethics* is, if not exactly a savior, the fountain of salvation.

These two dimensions of Spinoza's theology correspond, at least roughly, to the distinction H. S. Harris draws between Hegel's early career as *Volkserzieher* and his career as a philosopher "properly speaking," a philosopher "in the full sense, one committed to understanding the world, rather than to changing it."⁸ Of course, not only the "early theological writings" but also the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*, and the *Philosophy of Right* can be read as drafts of a *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and it would be of no small interest to compare Spinoza's text of that title with

these dimensions of Hegel's thought. But we would be entirely on our own. Hegel mentions Spinoza's *Tractatus* only to point out that it evoked the ire of Protestant theologians as well as Jewish rabbis before moving immediately to "his philosophy proper," namely the *Ethics* (H&S, 255; cf. LHP, 152). It is the onto-theological Spinoza that enthuses Hegel with his doctrine of the One Substance, the *causa sui* that is the only true reality.

Hegel had long since been defending this Spinoza against various attacks, but in the middle twenties, when his own thought was accused of being pantheistic by Tholuck and others,⁹ he repeatedly defended Spinoza (and himself) by denying that Spinoza, whom he sometimes identifies as a pantheist,¹⁰ was a pantheist in three specified senses and then, for good measure, assuring us that in any case he is not Spinoza.

Pantheism could be taken to be the thesis that God is identical with the world, taken as the all-inclusive heap of finite things in their empirical facticity. Hegel insists that neither Spinoza, nor he, nor, for that matter, anyone else, has affirmed such a view. It is at best a caricature.¹¹

Second, pantheism can be said to make God the cause of evil, or, what is in effect the same thing, to abolish the difference between good and evil, thus undermining both religion and morality. Hegel acknowledges that for Spinoza (and by implication for him as well) this distinction does not hold *sub specie aeternitatis*. God cannot be said to be either good or evil—a sharp contrast between pantheism and theism. But Hegel insists that there is a sublime morality in Spinoza such that we, who are not simply identical with God, are good or evil depending on how we relate to God. He finds Spinoza's attempt to interpret evil as a privation unconvincing, but he likes the gnostic overtones of his morality, according to which our highest duty is a certain kind of speculative cognition. Both morality and religion stay alive in Spinoza, he claims, insofar as the proper knowledge of God is at once the triumph over the passions and the intellectual love of God.¹²

Third, going back at least to Jacobi, pantheism has been equated with atheism. Even if the previous defense works with regard to morality, religion, at least, would seem to be once again in jeopardy. Hegel claims (1) that Spinoza is not an atheist in the sense of claiming that only the finite exists; (2) that he can be called an atheist in that (a) for him God and the world are not separate substances and (b) God is not conceived as Spirit; but (3) that on balance it is misleading to call him an atheist because it is the world rather than God that disappears in his system. "Acosmism" would be more descriptive than "atheism."¹³ Those who charge atheism are really concerned about themselves and "cannot forgive Spinoza for thus annihilating them."¹⁴

We must take a closer look at this annihilation. For it is one thing to say that Spinoza can be defended against various charges launched under the general heading of "pantheism," and quite another to say, "*Wenn man anfängt*

zu philosophiren, so muss man zuerst Spinozist seyn.”¹⁵ Once again the ominous *anfängt* and *zuerst*. But before we concern ourselves with Hegel’s reservations, we must see why he finds Spinoza not merely to be defensible but utterly essential. While Heine will praise Spinoza for his contribution to the materialist battle against spiritualism,¹⁶ Hegel will speak of “Spinoza’s idealism” (H&S, 256)! What can this mean?

Let us look at how Hegel distinguishes his own “absolute idealism” from the “subjective idealism” of Kant. In cognition

we strive to appropriate [the world] and to conquer it. To this end the reality of the world must be crushed as it were; i.e., it must be made ideal. At the same time, however, it must be remarked that it is not the subjectivity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question; rather, this identity is the Absolute, the authentically actual itself [*das Wahrfhafte selbst*]. Thus it is the goodness of the Absolute, so to speak, that lets individual beings enjoy their own selves, and it is just this that drives them back into absolute unity (EL, ¶ 42A1).

In other words, the finite objects of empirical consciousness are relative, not to the forms and categories of human cognition, but to the ontological whole to which they belong. “When an unconditioned of this sort is accepted as the Absolute and the Truth of reason (or as the *Idea*), then, of course, our empirical awareness is declared to be untrue, to be [only] *appearances*” (EL, ¶ 45). The objects that ordinary consciousness takes to be “self-standing and self-founded in their isolation from one another,” whose relations to each other are accordingly taken to be external, “are mere appearances, i.e., they do not have the ground of their being within themselves, but within something else” (EL, ¶ 45A).

For Kantian subjective idealism, the objects of empirical consciousness are appearances because of their relation to our knowing.

In fact, the true situation is that the things of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, not only *for us*, but also *in-themselves*, and that the proper determination of these things, which are in this sense “finite,” consists in having the ground of their being not within themselves but in the universal divine Idea. This interpretation must also be called idealism, but as distinct from the subjective idealism of the Critical Philosophy, it is *absolute idealism* (EL ¶ 45A).

In this account of absolute idealism, we cannot fail to hear the annihilation of the finite in the “acosmism” of Spinoza’s pantheism. It is in just these

terms that Hegel expounds Spinoza's basic idea of the One Substance as the only true reality. Descartes treats finite substances as "altogether independent Beings; [but] this independence of the two extremes is done away with in Spinozism by their becoming moments of the one absolute Being . . . this negation of all that is particular, to which every philosopher must have come, is the liberation of the mind and its absolute foundation" (*H&S*, 257–58). The true view is that "God alone exists; the finite has no reality, it is only phenomena, appearance" (*H&S*, 280). Or again, the particular or singular "does not truly exist for itself, and so is not truly actual. . . . Hence only the non-particularized or the universal is. It alone is what is substantial and therefore truly actual. . . . It is by negation that a singular thing is. Therefore it does not have genuine actuality. This on the whole is Spinoza's idea" (*LHP*, 154).

Of course, the universal, which alone truly *is*, is not the abstract universal, the kind as distinct from the instance or the type as distinct from token. It is rather substance as "the concrete universal," the Absolute Whole apart from which the parts are not. These parts, the individual beings Spinoza calls modes are "only the foregoing [substance as the concrete universal] warped and stunted" (*H&S*, 260). As if finite beings in their effort to be substances, self-standing realities, can only be tragicomic imitations of the God they can never be and without which they can never be. We are reminded of Sartre: as the desire to be God, human consciousness is a useless passion.

If Spinoza's doctrine of substance is a theory of the concrete universal, it is also a theory of the true infinite. Hegel famously rejects as the bad, false, or spurious infinite the positing of some finite quantity, spatial, temporal, or numerical, and then surpassing it, as we say, *ad infinitum*.¹⁷ Happily, he finds that Spinoza's doctrine of substance requires a different concept of infinity, the infinite of the intellect rather than the bad infinite of the imagination (*H&S*, 261). This absolute infinity is self-relation, "the absolute affirmation of itself" (*H&S*, 262; cf. *LHP*, 157). Using his own language, Hegel suggests that this affirmation is "the negation of negation" (*H&S*, 262–63). The bad infinite never gets beyond negation. Infinity is defined in terms of what each finite quantity is not. Or, to put it a bit differently, infinity is that which is always "beyond" whatever we have before us. To negate this negation, this going beyond to what is not yet before us, is not to repeat this action one more time but rather to think that all-encompassing totality which has no beyond. "God, therefore, is the absolutely infinite being" (*H&S*, 262–63; *LHP*, 158).

This notion of infinity as self-affirmation without limitation, without an other, without a beyond has two important corollaries. "The infinite should be represented as actually present."¹⁸ The genuine infinite consists in

the cause producing itself (*causa sui*)” (*LHP*, 157–58). The metaphysics of the true infinite will be, whether in Spinoza’s version or Hegel’s, a metaphysics of presence. Because it is determined by nothing outside of itself, the Absolute Substance will be fully present to itself as something fully actual and as something adequately known. If, as both Spinoza and Hegel hold, the only actual knowers are finite human beings, they will be the locus for the adequate knowledge of the Absolute. For that knowing, given this concept of the Infinite, will have to be the self-knowing of that which has no “beyond” and, correspondingly, whose self-knowing can have no “beyond,” no incompleteness, no inadequacy.¹⁹

This notion of presence opens out into a second corollary, the *causa sui* thesis. “The infinite should be represented as actually present, and this comes to pass in the Notion of the cause of itself, which is therefore the true infinity” (*H&S*, 262). This notion, *causa sui*, “is a fundamental concept in all speculation—return into self within the other” (*LHP*, 156).

For the theistic traditions, from which Spinoza and Hegel deliberately distance themselves, God as uncreated Creator is also *causa sui*. But Hegel points to the decisive difference in discussing the first of two relations of otherness that are overcome in this concept, namely cause and effect. “As soon as the cause has something else opposed to it—the effect—finitude is present” (*H&S*, 262). He doesn’t mean simply that if God creates the world, the world, as effect, will be finite. He means that God will be finite as well, since there will be something “beyond” God, a not-God, an other by negation. So he continues, “but here this something else is at the same time abrogated and it becomes once more the cause itself. The affirmative is thus negation of negation” (*H&S*, 262–63; cf. *LHP*, 158). The distinction between cause and effect is sublated “for a cause of itself produces only itself” (*LHP*, 156).²⁰

The other “beyond” that Hegel finds overcome in Spinoza’s speculative concept is the otherness of thought to being. Spinoza’s definition of *causa sui* is in terms of the ontological argument. By this notion he understands “that whose essence includes existence within itself, and which cannot be thought of otherwise than as existent” (cited at *LHP*, 155). Hegel comments, “Notion and existence are each the Beyond of the other; but cause of itself, as thus including them, is really the carrying back of this ‘beyond’ into unity. . . . The infinite is in the same way in itself and has also its Notion in itself; its Notion is its Being, and its Being its Notion; true infinity is therefore to be found in Spinoza” (*H&S*, 263).²¹

Spinoza’s substance is the concrete universal, the true infinite, the *causa sui*. It annihilates everything particular by drawing everything back to unity in the One. Through this *Aufhebung* of every *Jenseits*, it is able to be

fully present. These concepts are at the very heart of Hegel's own speculative project, at once his debt to Spinoza and the basis of his endorsement: philosophy begins with the standpoint of Spinoza.

But as we have noted, it is not an unqualified endorsement. We are to begin with Spinoza, but we are also to go beyond him. This is the point at which Hegel, having defended Spinoza (and by implication himself) against various charges of immoralism and atheism, and having insisted on the profoundly speculative character of his thought, assures us that he himself is not really a Spinozist after all, at least not simply so. "There is an absolute substance, and it is what is true. But it is not yet the whole truth, for substance must also be thought of as inwardly active and alive, and in that way must determine itself as spirit" (*LHP*, 154; cf. *H&S*, 257). As he puts it in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, without mentioning Spinoza by name because he is undoubtedly also thinking of Schelling, "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*" (*PS*, 10). He regularly complains that substance is not an adequate category, that it is too abstract (*H&S*, 289) and "not yet determined in itself as concrete" (*H&S*, 258).

What this means more concretely is that Spinoza fails to give sufficient place to individuality, subjectivity, personality, self-consciousness, and freedom (*H&S*, 269, 273, 287, 289; *LHP*, 161; *SL*, 537).²² As a result "one may say that in the system of Spinoza all things are merely cast down into the abyss of annihilation. But from this abyss nothing comes out" (*H&S*, 288; cf. *LHP*, 155). No doubt this is why Hegel associates Spinoza's substance with the $\tau\omicron\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$ of the Eleatics (*H&S*, 257) and with "the Oriental theory of absolute identity" (*H&S*, 252–53). The passage just cited from the *Phenomenology* comes immediately after the famous complaint about the night in which all cows are black.

Not surprisingly, Hegel is also critical of Spinoza's method. On the one hand, the geometrical method of beginning with definitions and axioms and proceeding by means of formal deduction is not suitable to the speculative subject matter. (*H&S*, 263, 266; *LHP*, 155).²³ On the other hand, too much is affirmed without being "deduced," justified by being shown to be essential to substance: that substance has the attributes of thought and extension, how it is that the order of thoughts and the order of things are the same, how negativity, and thus finitude, necessarily belong to substance, or in other words, why there are particulars (modes) (*H&S*, 269, 271, 289; *LHP*, 155, 158).²⁴ And apart from the problem of proceeding by means of formal deduction, the definitions are problematic on their own, for "they are adopted directly or presupposed, they are not deduced, for Spinoza does not know how he arrives at them" (*LHP*, 155). "To set up a system of form and

to grasp how the One is organized within itself as Bruno did—that is a task Spinoza renounced” (LHP, 162).



There are, then, three dimensions to Hegel’s reception of Spinoza’s doctrine of God as the one and only substance. First, he defends this view against the charge that it is silly and, more seriously, against the charge (which Nietzsche would have welcomed) that it is both immoralist and impious, the enemy of both God and goodness. Second, he tries to show in a variety of ways how this view is utterly essential to the speculative project. Finally, he offers a critique whose purpose is genuinely Hegelian, namely not to show that the doctrine is false but that its indispensable truth is abstract and inadequate. It is preparatory and at best penultimate. Whoever would be a philosopher must *first* be a Spinozist.

It is the second of these dimensions that especially concerns us here. If the third is nicely summed up in the *Phenomenology*’s requirement that we think the True “not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*” (PS, 10), the second is encapsulated in an equally familiar apothegm from that famous Preface, “The True is the whole” (PS, 11). We know that this whole is not the all-inclusive heap of finite things. *Natura naturans* is not the set in which all finite particulars (modes) that make up *natura naturata* are to be found. It is rather “the essence consummating itself through its development” (PS, 11), the *causa sui* causing itself and enclosing its “effects” within itself as itself.²⁵

Holism is the key to speculative thought. It involves grasping the totality as such. This holism is a two-edged sword, at once ontological and epistemological. When Spinoza defines substance as “what is in itself and is conceived through itself,”²⁶ he is making a claim about being and a claim about knowing. Hegel makes the same dual claim through the ambiguity of *das Wahre* in “the True is the whole.” By saying *das Wahre* instead of *die Wahrheit*, he makes it clear that in the first instance this is a statement about being. That which alone truly is is the whole. The part in its particularity, abstracted from the whole, that is from “the essence consummating itself through its development,” strictly speaking is not. This is the acosmic annihilation of the finite as it is cast into the abyss, or, in the milder Kantian language, the reduction of the finite to the status of appearance, phenomenon. In either case, as William James is reported to have said with reference to Royce, “the world is real but not so very damn real.”²⁷

But for Hegel, as for Spinoza (not to mention Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas) epistemology is not what you do when you have given up on ontology.²⁸ *Die Wahrheit* takes its nature from *das Wahre*. Correct

assertions about appearances will be, well, correct. But they will not be true.²⁹ Because *das Wahre* is the whole qua “essence consummating itself through its development,” it is necessary to say of the Absolute that “it is essentially a *result*” (PS, 11). If philosophical knowledge is to articulate this Absolute adequately, it too will have to be a result, not “the bare result . . . the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it” but rather “the result together with the process through which it came about” (PS, 2–3).

This is why philosophy cannot proceed *more geometrico*. For formal deduction assumes an atomistic conception of truth. The first premises, whether they be definitions, axioms, or whatever, are taken to be true as they stand, independent variables on which other truths depend but in need of nothing beyond themselves for their own truth. Spinoza’s definition of a mode as “that which is in another through which it is also conceived”³⁰ has a methodological corollary that he fails to draw, namely that the proposition has its truth only through its place in the System. Accordingly, no proposition can be the *pou sto* (place to stand) on which a system can be erected by formal deduction. Foundationalism as an epistemic strategy is dead.³¹ Knowing will be inescapably circular.³² Concepts have their meaning and propositions their truth only at the end of the journey, when the whole to which they belong (once again, a whole, not a heap) is before us.

In the background of Hegel’s holism, we find not only Spinoza but also Kant. On his view, the Understanding may satisfy itself with the conditioned, the partial and finite, but Reason demands the Unconditioned. Its principle is “to find for the conditioned knowledge obtained through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion.” This maxim becomes “a principle of *pure reason* through our assuming that if the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, subordinated to one another—a series that is therefore itself unconditioned—is likewise given, that is, is contained in the object and its connection.”³³ Given something finite or conditioned, “reason demands on the side of the conditions . . . absolute totality, and in so doing converts the category [of Understanding] into a transcendental idea [of Reason]” (A 409 = B 436), which is “none other than the concept of the *totality* of the *conditions* for any given conditioned. Now since it is the *unconditioned* alone which makes possible the totality of conditions, and, conversely, the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned, a pure concept of reason can in general be explained by the concept of the unconditioned, conceived as containing a ground of the synthesis of the conditioned” (A 322 = B 379).

There are three such ideas of reason: soul, world, and God. These give rise, respectively, to the paralogisms, antinomies, and unsuccessful proofs for the existence of God; they serve to remind us—but how could we possibly forget—that we are in Kant’s transcendental dialectic, that is, his theory of

transcendental illusion. Here the “*unconditioned* is always contained in the *absolute totality of the series* as represented in *imagination*” (A 416 = B 444, third emphasis added). Kant never tires of telling us, “No actual experience has ever been completely adequate to [an idea, a concept of reason]” (A 311 = B 367). Reason, as distinct from the Understanding, rests, as Kant has just told us, on the *assumption* that if the conditioned, the finite, the relative is given, the Unconditioned, the Infinite, the Absolute is given as well. But this assumption is unfounded. It arises when we “take the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts, which is to the advantage of understanding, for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves.” No more than “we can prevent the sea from appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore” can we prevent this *illusion*, but it is illusion, not speculative insight (A 297 = B 353-54).

So Kant, already in the eighteenth century, is a precocious post-modernist, a critic of totalizing thinking as found, paradigmatically, in the pantheisms of Spinoza and Hegel. A familiar way of saying this without anachronism is to say that Derrida is a Kantian.³⁴ But Derrida tells us that he is an Hegelian—almost.

The horizon of absolute knowledge is the effacement of writing in the logos, the retrieval of the trace in parousia, the reappropriation of difference. . . . Yet all that Hegel thought within this horizon, all, that is, except eschatology, may be reread as a meditation on writing. Hegel is also the thinker of *irreducible* [emphasis added] difference . . . he reintroduced, as I shall try to show elsewhere, the essential necessity of the written trace in a philosophical—that is to say Socratic—discourse that had always believed it possible to do without it; the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing.³⁵

Except for the completed totality signified by eschatology, Derrida tells us, he is a Hegelian. He belongs, as does Kant anachronistically, to that great tradition of philosophy signified by the rubric, Hegelians without the Absolute. He is a holist without the Whole.

Derrida’s reading of Hegel is most interesting. It is as if he were saying *Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in deiner [sic] Brust*.³⁶ One the one hand is the AK (for absolute knowledge) soul; on the other is the ID (for irreducible difference) soul. We can almost envisage a Freud-like book entitled *The AK and the ID*. The ID soul gives us a “meditation on writing” and is “the first thinker of writing.” Coming from Derrida, such a claim is no small compliment. But the AK soul is “the effacement of writing.”

It is obvious that everything depends on what Derrida means by “writing.” With an eye toward structuralism, he will spell this out in terms of the

relation between signifier and signified. We should note carefully what Derrida means by “signified.” In a structuralist context, the signifier is a grapheme or phoneme and the signified is a sense or meaning. In this theory of language, the world drops out of sight, at least temporarily. But Derrida uses the term more inclusively and speaks of the signified “whether it is determined strictly as sense (thought or lived) or more loosely as thing.” Thus, according to the theory Derrida wishes to challenge, the voice is in “absolute proximity” both to “being . . . and the meaning of being” (OG, 11–12).³⁷ Logocentrism or phonocentrism, as Derrida calls this theory, is at once a semantics and an ontology.

What, then, is writing? According to the phonocentric view that Derrida finds in Aristotle, Rousseau, and Hegel, among others (OG, 29) and that lies at the heart of the epoch of metaphysics (OG, 12–13, 19) that stretches from Plato to Hegel, or rather from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger (OG, 3), the distinction between speech and writing is quite simple. Speech signifies meanings or things that are not themselves signifiers, pointing beyond themselves; writing signifies spoken signs, which are signifiers, pointing beyond themselves. Thus writing means “a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos” (OG, 15).

The contrast with speech is crucial. The signified of the spoken signifier is not itself a signifier, pointing beyond itself. Why not? Since it dwells in eternity rather than time, it needs to point to no future that will complete it but is able to be a fully present logos. Derrida calls it (whether sense or reference, meaning or thing) the “infinite signified” (OG, 6) or the “transcendental signified” (OG, 20).³⁸ As “infinite,” it has nothing beyond itself to which it needs to point. Like Spinoza’s substance, it is conceived through itself. As “transcendental” or “trans-epochal” (OG, 23), it is beyond historical particularity and contingency and is in need of no future completion. It is an “eternal verity, eternally thought.”³⁹ Because it “is not itself a signifier, a trace. . . . The formal essence of the signified is *presence*” (OG, 18; cf. 13, 20, 23). The transcendental signified is a bit like the lady from Boston who was asked if she traveled much. “Travel?” she replied. “Why should I travel? I’m here already.” Phonocentrism is the metaphysics of presence, the semantics and ontology of having already arrived.

But why is it also called logocentrism? Long before we heard of Derrida, we learned that ‘logos’ means reason or discourse; and Derrida wants to call our attention to the way in which Reason has traditionally been defined in terms of this understanding of speech. For the tradition in question, the voice “signifies ‘mental experiences’ which themselves reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance. Between being and mind, things and feelings, there would be a relationship of translation or natural signification; between mind

and logos, a relationship of conventional symbolization. And the *first* convention, which would relate immediately to the order of natural and universal signification, would be produced as spoken language" (OG, 11).⁴⁰

Language, both as written and spoken signs, is conventional. Its origin is the cave of historical contingency. But not to worry. It is merely a tool for communicating what we have already learned in the bright sunshine above, where the mind, independent of particular human languages, and constituted as a natural and universal language transparent to things and thus self effacing,⁴¹ is able to be the "mirror of things by natural resemblance." Moreover, the voice "has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind," is wedded "indissolubly to the mind" (OG, 11) in a reference "able to 'take place' in its intelligibility, before its 'fall,' before any expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible here below. As the face of pure intelligibility, it refers to an absolute logos [the natural and universal language already mentioned] to which it is immediately united" (OG, 13). It is in such terms that "logos" and "science" and "truth" become inseparably intertwined.

But spoken signifiers (phonemes) belong to "the sensible here below." How can they be "immediately united" to the "pure intelligibility" of the "absolute logos," which was for medieval thought the very mind of God? By virtue of "of 'hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak' through the phonic substance—which *presents itself* as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore nonempirical or noncontingent signifier" (OG, 7–8).⁴² As I hear myself speak, the phonic substance, which belongs to the sensible world, is transubstantiated so that the sensible attributes house an intelligible substance.

For this tradition, the voice was "a full speech that was fully *present* (present to itself, to its signified, to the other . . . an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation" (OG, 8). Writing, by contrast, had the secondary role of being the interpreter of this speech beyond interpretation. Because of the immediate presence of the world to the mind and the immediate presence of speech to the mind, discourse without interpretation was possible.⁴³ The only place where immediacy was lacking, where there was a gap needing to be bridged by interpretation, was in the relation between two sensibles, the phonic sign and the graphic sign. Only after the "fall" from the intelligible world to the sensible world is interpretation necessary.⁴⁴

Derrida is willing to confine interpretation to writing (see OG, 14). But what if writing is originary and not supplementary, or, to say the same thing, what if all language is writing, not in the silly sense that inscription always precedes utterance, but in the sense that there is no transcendental signified? If all signifieds are themselves signifiers, pointing beyond themselves to meanings or "things" (facts, events) that are both other to and essential to them, so that like Spinoza's modes they are conceived through an other, every linguistic expression, whether inscription or utterance, will

require interpretation. To know what it means and how it might be true, it will be necessary to construe what is present in the light of that beyond itself, the dreaded *Jenseits*, to which it points. Absence is not what presence excludes but the condition for its very possibility.

This is Derrida's claim, according to which "writing thus *comprehends* language. Not that the word 'writing' has ceased to designate the signifier of the signifier" but because this phrase no longer signifies something secondary; it is rather the very

movement of language. . . . There the signified always already functions as a signifier. The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general, affects them always already, the moment they *enter the game*. There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language (OG, 7; cf. 6).⁴⁵

We can now identify more clearly the two souls Derrida finds in Hegel's breast. As the "thinker of irreducible difference" (ID), he is "the first thinker of writing" (OG, 26). This refers to his theory of the finite and of the Understanding as the locus of finite comprehension. Any finite idea, that is, anything short of the Absolute Idea, and any finite "thing," that is, anything short of Absolute Spirit, refers essentially beyond itself and is linked by *internal relations* to that which (1) is not itself but (2) is essential to its being itself. Not only language but the world itself has the structure of writing. To call this a thinking of *irreducible* difference is perhaps to signify its unremitting resistance to atomism of any form and its theory of external relations.⁴⁶

But Derrida tells us that Hegel is "*also* [his emphasis] the thinker of irreducible difference." There is more to the story, and perhaps what is irreducible for the Understanding will not be so for Reason. "The horizon of absolute knowledge is the effacement of writing in the logos, the retrieval of the trace in parousia, the reappropriation of difference" (OG, 26). Writing, trace, and difference are *aufgehoben* (effaced, retrieved, reappropriated) in the logos that gives parousia, full presence. The Absolute Idea and Absolute Spirit are transcendental signifieds; they have no *Jenseits* and cannot refer beyond themselves.

We can also speak here of "good writing," writing that escapes the character of writing by achieving totality as "an eternal presence." In contrast to the text, an open-ended, essentially temporal, and incomplete moment of language, which would be a "bad infinite" in Hegel's view, "good" writing is symbolized by the book, which has a beginning, middle, and end. "The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality

constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality. The idea of the book . . . is profoundly alien to the sense of writing" (OG, 18).

Hegel's transcendental signifieds, his semantic and ontological Bostons, are not atoms; they are totalities. They are internally complex, constituted by finitudes internally related to each other. In his claim that these nexus are in each case a Whole, Hegel sticks with Spinoza and resists Derrida. He is a holist with the Whole, fleeing the play of meaning and truth, the "absolute danger," the "monstrosity" (OG, 5) in which "language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self assured, contained, and *guaranteed* by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it" (OG, 6), but remained in close touch by "super-vising its inscriptions" (OG, 18).⁴⁷

What Derrida presents as "this death of the book" can also be called "a death of speech," though this latter phrase is but a metaphor: "before we speak of disappearance, we must think of a new situation for speech, of its subordination [as traditionally interpreted] within a structure of which it will no longer be the archon" (OG, 8). One could hardly ask for a better definition of *Aufhebung*, only here it is totality and sheer presence that are *aufgehoben* in a "structure" of incompleteness and presence infected with absence.⁴⁸ Derrida seeks to turn the tables on Hegel through an *Aufhebung* of the *Aufhebung*.⁴⁹

But this bold and scary reversal, this challenge to the privilege of speech and sheer presence, this deconstruction, is not a Derridean deed. It is rather a world-historical event, an epochal transition. Ever the Hegelian, Derrida thinks in historical terms; ever the Hegelian without the Absolute, he thinks we remain *in medias res*. So he speaks of logocentric metaphysics as the *epoch* of the logos and of metaphysics (OG, 12–14, 19). The fact that this epoch has lasted for "a few millennia" should not blind us to "the ineluctable world of the future which proclaims itself at present, beyond the closure of knowledge" (OG, 4; cf. 14). He finds it to be a world-historical irony of our own epoch that at the moment when phonetic writing, the condition for the possibility of philosophy and science as we have understood them, "begins to lay hold on world culture, science, in its advancements, can no longer be satisfied with it" (OG, 4). The logocentric Charlemagne crowns himself Emperor just as it is being noticed that he has no clothes.

This slowly evolving but surely growing dissatisfaction, which goes back at least to Nietzsche, Derrida calls the "closure" of the epoch of logocentrically defined reason. But he insists that "closure" is not synonymous with "end." Rather, the prevailing relation of speech and writing is "now able to produce its own *dislocation* and itself proclaim its *limits*" (OG,

4, emphasis added). Closure does not mean “to renounce” the concepts in question, “constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed,” but rather “to mark the conditions, the medium, and the limits of their effectiveness” (OG, 14, emphasis added).⁵⁰ This formula, not to renounce but to dislocate by recognizing limits, echoes the earlier formula, not disappearance but subordination to a structure whose archon is an other. Once again, we are talking not about abolition or abandonment but *Aufhebung*.

There is a good Kantian reason why we should not think of closure as going cold turkey, getting on the wagon, and swearing off logocentric liquor once and for all. Derrida always insists that metaphysics is not something we can simply leave behind. The disguises of writing’s primacy that constitute “the Western concept of language . . . are not historical contingencies that one might admire or regret. Their movement was absolutely necessary, with a necessity which cannot be judged by any other tribunal. The privilege of the *phonè* does not depend upon a choice that could have been avoided” (OG, 7). Or again, “Of course, it is not a question of ‘rejecting’ these notions; they are necessary” (OG, 13).⁵¹

But it is not necessary that they should be the *archon* of our understanding of language, reason, and knowledge, the trump card with which, if I may mix my metaphors, to bring difference to heel. We cannot help but think in terms of totality and of presence. But we fall into transcendental illusion if we fail to see, not so much the limits of these concepts but the limits of our power to embody them, to preside over a totality that has conquered every *Jenseits*, to experience a presence infected by no absence.

Derrida is an enthusiastic Hegelian as long as Hegel is “the thinker of irreducible difference.” But as soon as he begins to reduce the irreducible through a theory of absolute knowledge that is “the effacement of writing in the logos, the retrieval of the trace in parousia, [and] the reappropriation of difference,” Derrida becomes dubious. No doubt it is no accident that Derrida says “parousia” when he could have said “presence.” ‘Parousia’ means presence, to be sure, but also coming or advent, and it is the New Testament word for the second coming of Christ. Its use prepares us for what is to come in the next paragraph. Derrida might have said that what Hegel thought within the horizon of absolute knowledge can be construed as a meditation on writing, except for totality or presence. But he says “except eschatology” (OG, 26).

Like Hegel, Derrida is a kind of transcendental philosopher, but even more deeply a philosopher of history. For him as for Hegel, “philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts” (PR, 11). By speaking of eschatology here, he recognizes that for Hegel “totality” and “presence” are ultimately historical concepts signifying the absolute advent of the Absolute. For this reason, “eschatology” signifies a closure of a very different kind from Derrida’s

closure. Here it does mean end, fulfillment, completion, *Vollendung*. What Derrida helps us to see is that it must. For suppose that Science, in the form of Hegel's System, is, as he claims, "the crown of a world of Spirit" (PS, 7). Suppose it is the unsurpassable self-consciousness of a cultural epoch that stretches back continuously to Plato and the pre-Socratics and that finds him to be the oak tree implicit in the acorns we know as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. And suppose that this world, the epoch of logocentric metaphysics, is not ultimate but is vulnerable to being *aufgehoben* in a subsequent cultural epoch whose archon is not totality but the rupture of every totality by what it has excluded, not presence but the awareness of pasts and futures that cannot be re-presented and thus brought to presence. To call the self-consciousness of such a penultimate epoch "absolute knowledge" would be at best a howler and at worst a blatant sophism. It would quite plainly be relative to a cultural epoch that is itself relative, not THE EPOCH, absolute by being the *telos* of human history.

Just because Hegel understood this, his philosophy of absolute knowing was the announcement of the end of history, not in the sense that nothing would happen, but that nothing essential would happen. Hegel represents the closure of the metaphysical epoch in an eschatological sense. For if Nietzsche⁵² were to represent its closure, in the Derridean sense of an *Aufhebung* of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, it would make no sense to call what has been *aufgehoben* absolute.

Simple Simon met a pieman going to the fair. Had he been going from pantheism to postmodernity he might have run into our good friend Hegel instead.

Notes

1. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Viking: New York, 1954), 92. Nietzsche adds, "Even though the divergences are admittedly tremendous, they are due more to the difference in time, culture, and science."

2. Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 44–45.

3. Heine speaks of deism where we would speak of theism.

4. Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, trans. John Snodgrass (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 79.

5. For the specifics, see my essay "Von Hegel bis Hegel," in *The Emergence of German Idealism*, ed. Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 269–87. Fichte's name might well be added to Beiser's list.

6. The following sigla will be used in citing works of Hegel. Unless otherwise specified, the numbers are page numbers. Where paragraphs are indicated, A will

signify Addition (*Zusatz*) and R will signify Remark (*Anmerkung*). There are occasional minor changes of translation.

EL *The Encyclopedia Logic*, Trans. T. F. Geraets et al. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991). First part of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

H&S *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

LHP *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: The Lectures of 1825–26*, vol. III, trans. R. F. Brown et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

LPR *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 vols. trans. R. F. Brown et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87).

PM *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Third part of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

PR *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942).

PS *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

SL *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969).

7. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 72. For my analysis of Heidegger's critique of onto-theology, see "Overcoming Onto-theology," title essay of *Overcoming Onto-theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

8. H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xiii & xxxii.

9. On Tholuck, see LPR, 1:7–8, 157 n.17, 375 n.20; 3:36; and Philip M. Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821–1827* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), ch. 5. For explicit mention of Tholuck by Hegel, see the 1827 Preface to the *Encyclopedia*, EL, 8 and 13 and the note to PM, ¶ 573.

10. See PM, ¶ 573R; EL, 8–9; and LPR, 1:374, 379.

11. LPR, 1:375. Cf. PM, ¶ 573.

12. LPR, 1:378–79; H&S, 275–80; LHP, 160–64; and EL, 8–10. This last reference, from the 1827 Preface to the *Encyclopedia*, mentions Tholuck by name. Spinoza's *Ethics* culminates in a treatise on human freedom, which he equates, in the Preface to Book V, with blessedness. He rightly belongs to the eudaemonistic tradition in ethics. So it is of some interest when Michael Forster says that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel "makes 'happiness' the central goal of philosophy." *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 18–21.

13. EL, ¶ 50R, ¶ 151A; PM, ¶ 573; LPR, 1:376–77; H&S, 280–82; and LHP, 162–63. On Maimon as a possible source of the acosmism reply to the atheism charge, see LPR, 1:377 n. 27, but cf. Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. J. Michael Steward and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 314 n. 54.

14. H&S, 280, 282. Heine writes, "Instead of saying that [Spinoza] denies God, one might say that he denied man." *Religion and Philosophy*, 72.

15. *Sämtliche Werke*, hrsg. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommanns Verlag, 1959), XIX, 376. Glockner reproduces Michelet's version from the first edition of the *Werke* (1833–36), while H&S translate from the second edition (1840–44). Hence the slightly different wording from the parallel passage cited above.

16. For Spinoza's pantheism, God "is matter as well as spirit, both are equally divine, and he that insults the sanctity of matter is as impious as he that sins against the Holy Ghost." Thus Spinoza contributes to "the overthrow of the religion of spiritualism" after which "it will still be necessary to offer grand expiatory sacrifices to matter, in order to atone for old offenses against it. . . . Thus the immediate aim of all our modern institutions is the rehabilitation of matter." The French Revolution, based on French materialism, has an ally in pantheists, who "promote the welfare of matter. . . ." *Religion and Philosophy*, 74–78.

17. See SL, 137–50 and EL, ¶¶ 93–95, 111, and ¶ 104A2.

18. With reference to the bad infinite, Hegel writes, "Philosophy does not waste time with such empty and other worldly stuff. What philosophy has to do with is always something concrete and strictly present" (EL, ¶ 94A; cf. ¶¶ 24A, 60R, & 213A). He cites a poem in which Haller tries to think of God in terms of numerical infinity, but then concludes, "These [monstrous numbers] I remove, and thou liest all before me" (EL, ¶ 104A2). In introducing the *Phenomenology*, he writes that "if the Absolute is supposed merely to be brought nearer to us through this instrument [cognition], without anything in it being altered, like a bird caught by a lime-twig, it would surely laugh our little ruse to scorn, if it were not with us, in and for itself, all along, and of its own volition" (PS, 47).

19. Contemporary eliminative materialists might argue that this implication would not hold within their frame of reference. Matter would be the totality, which would include consciousness. Human consciousness as finite could have matter in its totality as an unreachable "beyond" such that knowledge would always be approximation; but matter, the absolute substance, would have nothing beyond itself. To which it might be responded that if through emergence matter gives rise to a consciousness, that matter might well be opaque to that consciousness, a "beyond" that eludes adequate knowledge. I have discussed Hegel's allergic reaction to the "beyond" in "Hegel's Angst vor dem Sollen," *The Owl of Minerva*, 25, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 187–94.

20. Theists would find this latter claim to be a *non sequitur*. They see no reason why a God who is *causa sui* could not also be the cause of a world that is not God. Why should a *causa sui* cause *only* itself?

21. Theists can agree that being fulfills the requirements of thought and is thus inherently intelligible. But in answer to the question, "Whose thought is thus isomorphic with being?" they are not, qua theists, committed to joining Spinoza and Hegel in answering "Human thought." Thus God remains a *Jenseits* for Anselm, to whom both Spinoza and Hegel are indebted for the ontological argument. "But if you have found [God], why is it that you do not experience what you have found. Why, O Lord God, does my soul not experience You if it has found You? . . . Is [the soul's] eye darkened by its weakness, or is it dazzled by Your splendour? In Truth it is both darkened in itself and dazzled by You . . . O supreme and inaccessible light; O whole

and blessed truth, how far You are from me whom am so close to You! . . . In you I move and in You I have my being and I cannot come near to you. You are within me and around me and I do not have any experience of You. . . . Still You hide away, Lord, from my soul in Your light and blessedness, and so it still dwells in its darkness and misery. For it looks all about, but does not see Your beauty. . . . the senses of my soul, because of the ancient weakness of sin, have become hardened and dulled and obstructed." *Proslogion*, ch. 14–17.

22. Hegel seems to be repudiating Spinoza's determinism and affirming freedom of the will; for the other terms associated with this complaint make it clear that the issue is not the political freedom that is central to the *Rechtsphilosophie* and the Philosophy of World History.

23. The Preface to the *Phenomenology* also contains a critique of mathematical procedures (PS, 24 ff.). Kant had written that "mathematics is the only science that has definitions" and that since "philosophical definitions are never more than explications of given concepts . . . the definition in all its precision and clarity ought, in philosophy, to come rather at the end than at the beginning of our enquiries." *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 729–31 = B 757–59.

24. Cf. Hegel's critique of Kant's metaphysical deduction of the categories, *EL*, ¶ 42R.

25. Like the romantics, Hegel finds in Spinoza the basis for an organic view of the real in spite of the latter's mechanistic physics. Crucial to this transformation is Herder's *God: Some Conversations*, trans. Frederick H. Burkhardt (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1940). Hegel's equation of the True with the whole is surrounded by organic metaphors.

26. *Ethics*, Part I, Definition 3.

27. I owe this reference to John Smith but do not know where it is to be found in print.

28. As Catherine Pickstock puts it, epistemology is what happens to ontology when it ceases to be theology, substituting the transcendental for the transcendent. If that is characteristic of "modernity," then Spinoza and Hegel are emphatically premodern. See *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 62–70, 127.

29. For this distinction between correctness and truth, see *SL*, 38 and *EL*, ¶¶ 24A2, 33, 99A, 165R, 172R&A, 213R&A. It reappears in Heidegger. See *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 2 & 26, and "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 100.

30. *Ethics*, Part I, Definition 5.

31. Quine draws this conclusion for empiricism when he rejects its "dogma" of "reductionism" on holistic grounds, arguing that "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body." See "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 41. A related holism underlies Wilfrid Sellars' repudiation of "the myth of the given" in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, vol. I of *Minnesota*

Studies in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956). The holism of Quine and Sellars is central to Richard Rorty's assault on foundationalist epistemology in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 10 and ch. 4.

32. See Tom Rockmore, *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

33. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 307–308 = B 364. Subsequent references in the text will be by the standard A and B pages.

34. For Kantian interpretations of deconstruction, see Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), and Irene E. Harvey, *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). For the debate over whether Derrida is a transcendental philosopher, see Richard Rorty, "Is Derrida a transcendental philosopher?" in *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and John D. Caputo, "On Not Circumventing the Quasi-Transcendental: The Case of Rorty and Derrida" in *Working Through Derrida*, ed. Gary B. Madison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

35. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 26. Henceforth cited in text as OG. In explicating this passage, I shall focus on the pages immediately preceding it.

36. From Goethe's *Faust*, line 1112.

37. When we read that speech is said to be "fully present . . . to itself, to its signified, to the other" (OG, 8), we can read this to mean that it is fully self-conscious and fully present both to its sense and to its reference. Cf. OG, 18, where Derrida says "signified (sense or thing, noeme or reality. . . ." Also *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 9. In *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), "signified" usually signifies 'meaning' or 'sense', but 44 and 65 make it clear that it also signifies 'referent'.

38. For other references to the transcendental signified, see *Positions*, second and third interviews, and *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.

39. Derrida quotes from Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, 1, 16a (his emphasis): "Just as all men have not the same writing so all men have not the same speech sounds, but mental experiences, of which these [speech sounds] are the *primary symbols*, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are images" (OG, 11). The phrase rendered here as "mental experiences," *pathēmata tes psychēs*, is elsewhere translated as "affections of the soul."

40. The mind as mirror easily converts into the mind as transparent medium. "The feelings of the mind, expressing things naturally, constitute a sort of universal language that can then efface itself. It is the stage of transparence" (OG, 11).

41. See previous note.

42. Here we encounter the inner speech motif that Derrida will develop at length in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

43. Thus it comes as no surprise that Derrida finds Nietzsche's emphasis on interpretation and perspective as a decisive unsettling of logocentrism and its understanding of truth (OG, 19).

44. On the "fall" into interpretation, see "Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book" in *Writing and Difference*, and the critique of Derrida in James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), where interpretation is affirmed, but as belonging to creation rather than the fall.

45. N.B. Play is not something we do, arbitrarily perhaps, but the constant referring beyond whatever is present that is constitutive of language whether we like it or not. See "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, and my discussion in "Deconstruction and Christian Cultural Theory: An Essay on Appropriation," in *Pledges of Jubilee*, ed. Lambert Zuidervart and Henry Luttikhuisen (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1995), 107–125. That the "signifying references" to which Derrida refers have both a "spatial" and a temporal character is a central thesis of "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*.

46. In "Laughing at Hegel," *The Owl of Minerva*, 28, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 39–58, I have developed this theme in terms of Hegel's critique of immediacy.

47. This notion of being adrift in limitlessness inevitably recalls the dangerous but exhilarating "open sea" that Nietzsche associates with the death of God. *The Gay Science*, Section 343. Derrida's open sea does not require the death of God, whatever the character of his personal atheism. It only requires (1) that we are not God and (2) that human reason cannot grasp the Whole as if it were God by peering directly into the divine mind or over the divine shoulder to see things, as Spinoza would have it, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

48. Cf. the discussion of structure in "Structure, Sign, and Play."

49. Derrida discusses the possibility of an *Aufhebung* of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* in his essay on Bataille. See "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" in *Writing and Difference* and my analysis in "Laughing at Hegel." If the Hegelian *Aufhebung* is the teleological suspension of finite meanings in infinite meaning, Bataille (and Derrida) wonder about the possibility of placing all meaning within the horizon of nonmeaning, of discovering that beyond the "Whole" as *Grund* there is the *Abgrund*. In this case, philosophy would appear "as a form of natural or naïve consciousness" (275), one more way of coping with the cave.

50. In *The Philosophy of the Limit* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Drucilla Cornell gives a nice interpretation of deconstruction as the discovery of limits that various traditions have ignored or denied.

51. This is why Derrida can write, "The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside. . . ." (OG, 24).

52. Or Bataille. See note 49.

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Part III

*System, Progress, and
Culmination in Hegel*



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Chapter 9

Systematicity and Experience: Hegel and the Function of the History of Philosophy



Kevin Thompson

Is there a place for the history of philosophy within the Hegelian system? To pose the question in this way is already to acknowledge that the function of the history of philosophy, for Hegel, can only properly be measured by its standing with respect to the systematic character of reason. But this means that what is at stake here is nothing less than the relationship between the historicity and systematicity of philosophical thought and it is precisely with this problem that this essay is fundamentally concerned.

Now the first edition of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1817) would appear to answer our question quite plainly. Despite the fact that Hegel had already begun to lecture on the subject both in Jena and in Heidelberg in the preceding years, the history of philosophy simply occupies no place in the body of this work. One might assume that the reason for this is that the history of philosophical reflection is, at its core at least, concerned solely with the merely contingent, the external, the finite, the domain of empirical singularity: that it is, in short, like the other disciplines excluded from the system proper, merely positive and that, as such, it bears no intrinsic relationship to the sphere of philosophical thought, the domain of the necessary, the internal, the infinite, the universal, the realm of what Hegel called genuine science.¹

And yet, throughout the set of lecture courses Hegel devoted to the history of philosophy in his mature period, he consistently held that “philosophy is a system in development, and this is the history of philosophy.”² Philosophy is unique, says Hegel. It has a history, like other areas of inquiry,

but its history is not merely a succession of arbitrary events. It is instead, like the histories of art and religion, a rational process, a movement of formation. But what is being forged in and through this development is not a mere representation of truth, as it is in the realms of art and religion, but rather truth itself. Hegel thus claims that philosophy is distinct from these other spheres in that its history is itself the system of science in development. Now, is this claim to be dismissed as some aberrant position Hegel maintained in his lectures but was never able to justify to his own satisfaction and thus never defended in his published writings? Or is this an articulation of some esoteric doctrine reserved solely for the most committed disciples? Or might this statement perhaps, despite appearances to the contrary, in fact express the central insight of Hegel's published work?³

I will argue in what follows that the history of philosophy, for Hegel, is indeed the development in the order of time of the system of philosophy and that it is precisely as such that it fulfills a function Hegel maintains is necessary for a distinct form of justification of the system. Specifically, I will show that Hegel distinguished two basic requirements that the system of philosophical science had to meet to satisfy the demands of reason: first, it had to provide its own justification of itself from within itself, and, secondly, the system had to demonstrate that it accords with actuality. The former, which can be called the speculative proof, is fulfilled by the intrinsic circularity of the system of philosophical sciences. The latter, what I shall call the experiential proof (Hegel refers to this in the lecture courses as the "empirical proof"), is preeminently fulfilled by the history of philosophy. In what follows, I will demonstrate that this justificatory function for the history of philosophy is already present in the first edition of the *Enzyklopädie* (1817), but that it only becomes prominent with the revisions and additions Hegel made for the second edition (1827).

Hegel believed that, for the history of philosophy to fulfill the role just outlined, a solution had to be achieved to the fundamental dilemma that stands at the very core of this science. If the ultimate object of philosophy is truth, an object at once both timeless and eternally valid, then why does the historical record present us with series of doctrines constantly succeeding and disagreeing with one another? How is the oneness of truth to be reconciled with the diversity of actual philosophical systems? Do all such systems have equal value and equal weight? Or are they all simply ill-begotten mistakes of the past? In short, we could ask, is the history of philosophy a history of mere opinion or is it a history of error? Hegel argues that this problem is a result of a fundamentally impoverished conception of truth and it is precisely the overcoming of this conception that constitutes, for him, the philosophical challenge posed by the history of philosophy.⁴ Moreover, he believed it was this problem that properly determined the relationship between

the system of philosophical science and the discipline of the history of philosophy itself.

The aim of what follows is thus twofold: (1) to identify the function of the history of philosophy in relationship to the system of philosophical science, and (2) to understand specifically how the historical character of this discipline uniquely enables it to serve this role. I will begin by developing an account of the speculative and experiential requirements that reason places on the system of philosophical science. The basis for this will be a comparison of the first and second editions of the Introduction to the *Enzyklopädie*. Its purpose is to show, from Hegel's published writings, how his understanding of the history of philosophy and its relationship to the system of philosophical science is framed by the problem of justification. I will then turn to the challenge posed by the history of philosophy proper, showing how in his lectures Hegel attempted to resolve the contradiction embodied in the concept of a history of truth. I will conclude by demonstrating how this resolution determined, for Hegel, the relationship between the speculative and experiential proofs of the system.

Circularity and History: The Introduction of 1817

Hegel's most complete account of the concept of the history of philosophy in the writings of his mature period is to be found in the revisions he made for the Introduction to the second edition of the *Enzyklopädie* (1827). There he writes, "the same development of thinking that is presented in the history of philosophy is presented in philosophy itself, but freed from that historical externality, purely in the element of thinking."⁵ This statement clearly appears to be a repetition of the claim that Hegel had been making in his lecture courses, identifying the system of philosophy with the history of philosophy. But it would also seem to indicate just as clearly what was only hinted at in that statement, namely that a fundamental distinction exists between these domains. The emergence and development of philosophy in history is its progression in time, what Hegel here calls its occurrence in "external history," but this is quite distinct, he says, from its "unfolding of itself within itself" as a systematic whole, and the inner concreteness and determinacy of the latter is something it achieves precisely insofar as it is freed from the externality of the former. As a result, a rather rigid distinction would seem to be put in place here between the system of reason and its historical development, and as such the history of philosophy would appear, despite the importance Hegel attributed to it, to be denied anything more than a mere cursory function in his thought. However, an examination of the context of this statement suggests otherwise. This can be made clear if

we consider the Introduction as a whole first, focusing upon its initial formulation in the 1817 edition, and then examine more carefully the revisions and additions Hegel introduced in the second edition, especially as he refined the claims he had made concerning the justification of the system itself. I believe it is in this light that the precise function for Hegel of the history of philosophy in relationship to the system can best emerge.

The Introduction to the *Enzyklopädie* is concerned with a problem quite familiar to students of Hegel's work, and it addresses this issue within the context of an equally familiar distinction. The problem is the beginning (*Anfang*) of philosophy. The distinction is that between representation (*Vorstellung*) and genuine science (*Wissenschaft, Erkenntnis*).

Hegel holds that what are generally called sciences (for example disciplines such as mathematics, jurisprudence, and zoology) all have their foundation in the immediacy of the power of representation and as such are able to take the legitimacy of the matters that they investigate for granted. This affords them two quite significant advantages. First, insofar as what they examine is immediately ascertainable—be their object number, law, or animals—the beginning of these sorts of inquiries is never in doubt. They can be, in a word, presupposed as accessible and familiar to all. Accordingly, the justification of such pursuits is always readily available. Secondly, because their object is already given and is thus susceptible to examination, these sorts of inquiries can proceed analytically, uncovering the various defining attributes of the matter under investigation purely through a combination of inspection and experimentation under the guidance of the basic rules of logic. Reaching scientific conclusions thus amounts to nothing other than discovering what is already there in the object. Consequently, neither the validity of engaging in such projects nor the results obtained thereby are ever really in doubt. Representation provides an ever renewable resource for their justification.

Genuine knowledge, and accordingly genuine science, however, cannot be restricted to the domain of representation. It must grasp truth itself, not its mere portrayal. Genuine science must, in short, go beyond the order of representation and it must do so in terms of both its object and its method of elaborating the essential determinations of the various matters it investigates. It thus cannot enjoy the advantages available to inquiries that are erected upon the foundation of representation. Hegel holds philosophy to be just this sort of science. Consequently, neither its object, nor its methodology, nor in turn its results can be validated by the immediacy of their givenness. The norms of evaluation that the science of philosophy must satisfy to justify itself cannot be external to it. Philosophy must be uniquely self-justifying. Reason must set its own standards, and it must itself judge whether it has in fact complied with them, thereby demonstrating its right standing before its

own tribunal. This is what Hegel means when, in the 1817 Introduction, he writes, “its [philosophy’s] concept as well as the concept of philosophy itself can only be comprehended within philosophy” (Enz. [1817], §4), or in the version of 1827 that “[t]his thinking itself in the philosophical mode of cognition needs to be grasped in its necessity, as well as justified in respect of its ability to become cognizant of the absolute objects. But any insight of this kind is itself philosophical cognition, and therefore it can only fall within philosophy” (Enz. [1827], §10). To justify such a system as this thus requires that philosophy be inherently circular. The system must circle back upon itself so as to validate its beginning, its methodology, and, in turn, its completion, the whole it forms.⁶ This is what was termed above the speculative proof of the system of philosophical sciences. Having reached this conclusion, Hegel proceeds, in the 1817 edition, to lay out a preliminary account of the nature of philosophy, arguing in particular that philosophy is the science of reason insofar as reason is conscious of its unity with itself in and through that which is other than it, namely being (Enz. [1817], §5), and thus that such a science must specify its various moments in and through the necessity of this fundamental self-relation (§6) and thereby form a genuine encyclopedia presenting the systematic totality that is rationality itself (§7).

However, before concluding his preliminary account, Hegel pauses momentarily to consider the relationship of the system he has just proposed to the diverse sorts of enterprises that comprise the history of philosophical reflection. He remarks that it would be a mistake to confuse the system just projected with what had been, at least since Kant, the accepted understanding of a philosophical system, namely, the unity of a manifold of knowledge under a simple fundamental principle. The principle governing a genuine system of philosophical science, such as that elaborated in the Introduction, is unique in that it integrates within itself all other principles, including those that at least initially appear radically opposed to it. Hegel maintains, as evidence in support of this claim, that philosophy “shows this *in itself* and also *in its history*” (Enz. [1817], §8 [emphases added]). The former, of course, falls under the general task of the self-justification of the system. With regard to the latter, however, Hegel says that what appear in history to be different, even opposed, philosophies are only “one philosophy at different stages of development” (Enz. [1817], §8). He notes, in the Remark to this paragraph, that the existence of so many conflicting philosophies is typically used to justify contempt for philosophical reflection itself. He thus links the problem at issue here to the cultural skepticism he cites in the Preface to this edition as one of the factors that has helped cultivate a mood of fundamental indifference to philosophy as a distinctively scientific endeavor (cf. Enz. [1817], 5–6).⁷ In the Remark, he identifies the root of this problem as an abstract and rigid separation of universality and particularity, invoking in

reply an example that he repeats again in the lecture courses: who, when they've asked for fruit, refuses cherries, pears, and grapes because they are not fruit itself?⁸

These rather tentative formulations obviously served as the immediate predecessors to the more fully articulated claim from the 1827 Introduction with which we began. Hegel nevertheless remains silent here as to the import, if any, of the history of philosophy. And yet, even in this undeveloped condition, these assertions clearly hold open the possibility that the unique systematic character of philosophy can be established in two ways: in itself, that is to say the system can justify itself, and in history, that the temporal course of philosophical exploration can provide its own unique and distinctive validation of the systematic character of philosophy, that all philosophies are but different stages in the development of one philosophical system. What still remains unclear here, however, is, of course, precisely why a demonstration that appealed to the history of philosophy in this way might be needed, what could be the motivation for it, and if it were needed, how it could be successfully carried out.

Now it is this set of problems that makes the revisions and additions Hegel produced for the Introduction in the 1827 edition so important, for it is there that he began fundamentally to rethink the basic problem of the justification required for the system of philosophical science and, in so doing, introduced two distinct norms that reason places upon such a project. As we shall now see, the speculative and experiential proofs flow from these requirements.

Systematicity and Ordinary Consciousness: The Introduction of 1827

The Introduction of 1827 is certainly concerned, just as the Introduction of 1817 was, with demonstrating that the system of philosophy can only be justified by itself and from within itself, what was called above the speculative proof. But it also introduces a quite different consideration into this preliminary account. Whereas the 1817 Introduction had been focused almost exclusively, with the exception of the brief remarks discussed above, on establishing the necessarily circular character of the system, that is to say with the speculative proof of the system, the matter at issue in the 1827 Introduction is primarily the problem of the relationship between philosophical science and experience, what Hegel calls here, retrieving a concept that had played such an important role in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, "ordinary consciousness" (*Enz.* [1827], §4), and it is precisely in the context of justifying the system before the touchstone of actuality that he returns to the relationship between the historicity and systematicity of the science of philosophy.

The locus of the problem has to do with the objects with which philosophy is concerned. Hegel initially defines philosophy here as “a thinking consideration (*denkende Betrachtung*) of objects” (Enz. [1827], §2). This leads him into a discussion of the nature of these objects and he notes that, although thought is the defining feature of human beings, and that as such everything that is human is so as a result of thought itself, the objects that are most at issue for us do not appear in the form of thoughts, but rather are given precisely in and through feeling, intuition, and imagination. The fundamental problems that philosophy seeks to investigate do not initially present themselves in the form of concepts.⁹ They are instead felt, intuited, and imagined; in short, they are, says Hegel, matters that present themselves to us in and through representation.

However, rather than simply invoking the distinction between genuine science and representation, as he had in the 1817 Introduction, Hegel here lingers over this problem, recognizing that it presents a genuine obstacle to understanding the systematic character of philosophical science. In particular, he focuses on the peculiar nature of the philosophical mode of knowing and acknowledges that the need for such a standpoint must not only be awakened, but justified as well, precisely in relationship to what for Hegel is the highest form of representation, namely religious faith. Consequently, philosophy as a thinking consideration can only be a “thinking over or in accordance with (*Nachdenken*)” (Enz. [1827], §5) the objects of fundamental concern as they present themselves in and through our feelings, our intuitions, our images, our opinions. Thus the content of philosophy is the whole arena of what humans produce as both their inner and outer world, and this, Hegel says, is nothing other than “actuality (*Wirklichkeit*),” which, of course, as encountered by consciousness, is “experience (*Erfahrung*)” (Enz. [1827], §6). Hegel thus concludes that since philosophical cognition and ordinary consciousness are but two ways of confronting the same object, namely actuality, and, in particular, since the former at least initially would seem in some sense to depend on the latter, as a thinking-after, philosophy must necessarily accord with that which is experienced in and through ordinary consciousness; as Hegel says, “its [philosophy’s] correspondence (*Übereinstimmung*) with actuality and experience is necessary,” claiming that this correspondence stands as an “external touchstone (*äubern Prüfstein*) for the truth of a philosophy” (Enz. [1827], §6).

Hegel is careful to note though that this requirement is not merely some sort of appeal to brute experience as the ultimate arbiter of philosophical truth. The consideration of the relationship between philosophy and ordinary consciousness clearly places a significantly different demand on the system of philosophical sciences, but in so doing, it does not require that the science of philosophy be justified as a fundamentally empirical discipline.

Hegel is not here invoking some form of a simple empiricist criterion. Three points make this clear. First, the concept of experience (*Erfahrung*), for Hegel, is not restricted, of course, to the immediacy of the senses, but includes as well the distinct objects of the ethical and religious domains: freedom, spirit, and God (*Enz.* [1827], §8). The content of experience is as wide then as the various modes of encountering made possible in and through representation. Secondly, Hegel holds, of course, that actuality is not identical with whatever appears, the insignificant, the contingent, or merely transient. It refers instead to the reciprocal interrelation of things that is necessary for them to be what they are. Accordingly, actuality must be taken here in what Hegel calls an “emphatic sense” (*Enz.* [1827], §6A), i.e., as designating the essential interdependence of things. Thirdly, and most importantly, experience itself requires that for something to be accepted and held as true, i.e., held to be valid, it must be an object in and through which reason can come into relationship with itself; that is to say, it must be, as Hegel puts it, a content that reason can find “in oneness and in union with the certainty of its own self” (*Enz.* [1827], §7A).

Consequently, the requirement that philosophy accord with actuality means that for the system of philosophy to be found to be in right standing in the court of reason, it must fulfill a twofold burden: on the one hand, it must show that the objects with which it deals are grasped in such a way that their essential characteristics and necessary systematic interrelations are in agreement with the way in which reason experiences them in actuality, and, on the other, it must show that in and through the systematic presentation of these objects, reason is able to bring itself into union with itself. As Hegel says, the aim of this is “through the cognition of this correspondence to bring about the reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) of self-conscious reason with existent reason, i.e., with actuality” (*Enz.* [1827], §6). These burdens constitute what I have called the experiential proof that reason demands of the system of philosophical sciences. And the elaboration of this norm is the fruit of the revisions and additions found in the Introduction of 1827. Now it is precisely this advance that leads Hegel to expand and reformulate his earlier statements concerning the history of philosophy, and it is in these revisions that the special function of such a history is revealed.

In fact, it is in light of these considerations that Hegel returns, in the 1827 edition, to a problem that had been of central concern throughout the writings of the Jena period, but that had nevertheless gone missing in the Introduction of 1817: the need (*Bedürfnis*) for philosophy itself. Hegel defines this as the desire of spirit to relate itself to itself precisely in terms of its highest manifestation, namely in the form of thinking (cf. *Enz.* [1827], §11). Now although philosophy essentially arises out of this need, the condition that prompts its historical emergence and subsequent development is, Hegel

claims, nothing other than experience itself. Since this designates a region that is not properly speaking within the sphere of philosophy, that is to say within the realm of thought, experience cannot be the sought-for beginning (*Anfang*) for philosophy, but only what Hegel calls its “starting point (*Ausgangspunkte*)” (*Enz.* [1827], §12). Philosophy is therefore a constant striving to move beyond the domain governed by the power of representation, a yearning that raises itself out of this condition so as to enable thought to come into relationship with itself. And yet, it is precisely a consideration of the course of this coming to be, i.e., the course of philosophy’s historical development, that fulfills the burdens of the experiential proof set forth above.

Hegel indicates this by distinguishing between two ways of understanding the history of philosophy. On the one hand, considered simply as a series of successive temporal events, the coming to be that is the history of philosophy could only possess the defining mark of mere immediacy and externality, contingency. Such a presentation would thus portray the philosophical systems and the principles upon which they are erected as an arbitrary collection, a mere aggregate; it would provide these systems with what Hegel calls here “a kind of mere diversity (*Verschiedenheit*)” (*Enz.* [1827], §13) and, as a result, it would only serve to feed the contempt and skeptical indifference that he believes plague the pursuit of genuine science. However, when, on the other hand, this same coming to be is understood as a necessary formative process born of the desire of reason itself, then it demonstrates the inherent oneness of philosophy and shows the diversity just exposed to be nothing other than “stages of its [the one philosophy’s] formation” (*Enz.* [1827], §13), and the variety of conflicting principles so prevalent in history to be “only branches of one and the same whole” (*Enz.* [1827], §13).

The proximate cause of Hegel’s appeal to the history of thought is thus the threat of skepticism that the apparent diversity of the historical record poses. A wholly circular justification is unable to deal satisfactorily with this sort of threat, at least directly, on its own terms, and thus a genuinely scientific history of philosophy must be advanced so as to overcome the challenge posed by such randomness and conflict. In accomplishing this, such a history establishes in turn the distinctive systematic character of philosophy itself. The history of philosophy thus shows that the intrinsic self-related whole, the mutual and necessary interdependence of things that constitutes what reason holds to be the defining mark of a truly rational totality, is discernable under the apparent transience of the externality of mere temporal succession. Given this, reason is able to be in union with itself in and through the domain of temporal exteriority, the realm of representation. The function of such a history then is clear. It is nothing less than the reconciliation of reason as it is in itself with reason as it exists in actuality. The motive

underlying it is the requirement that the system correspond to actuality, that it accord with experience. And to do that the challenge of skepticism must be overcome. This then is the function of the history of philosophy for Hegel, and consequently it is the experiential proof reason requires to establish the inherent rationality of its systematic presentation.¹⁰

Hegel's reformulations in 1827 of the claims about the history of philosophy made in the Introduction of 1817 thus mark a significant advance in at least his public account of the role of such a history. But beyond the conclusions just reached, what is of particular note is that what Hegel had specified in the 1817 Introduction as being the sole role for the history of philosophy, namely the demonstration that what appear to be various and opposed philosophical systems are but different stages in the development of one philosophy, is broadened in the 1827 version. It now includes the proof that all philosophical principles are but branches of one whole, that knowledge as such forms a systematic totality, a function he had clearly ascribed exclusively to the circular nature of philosophy in 1817. In short, our analysis suggests that, with regard to the function of the history of philosophy, Hegel held in 1817 to a developmental thesis, whereas by 1827 he had come to embrace what would appear to be a much richer organic position concerning this discipline.

But does this mean, then, that the distinct requirements for a speculative and for an experiential proof can be collapsed in the history of philosophy? Could such a history then, properly constructed, accomplish both tasks? What is the relationship between the experiential and speculative proofs? The answer to these questions lies in the lectures Hegel devoted to the history of philosophy in the period between the first and second editions of the *Enzyklopädie*, and, in particular, in the resolution offered there to the fundamental dilemma at the heart of such a history.

Truth, Time, and Necessity: The Lectures of 1820

It will be best to begin this discussion by recalling the antinomy posed by the history of philosophy. If the ultimate object of philosophy is truth, and this is at once both timeless and eternally valid, then why does the historical record present us with series of doctrines constantly succeeding and disagreeing with one another? Are these but so many equally valid opinions, or so many equally invalid errors? If they are neither, then how is the oneness and eternality of truth to be reconciled with the diversity of philosophical systems? How can we even speak of a historical formation of truth? Moreover, how could such a process as this possess any sort of necessity to the sequence of events that comprises it? Most simply, how is the legitimacy of the history

of philosophy to be established in the face of the skeptical challenge posed precisely by this history?

Hegel addresses these questions in some form or other in all the available material from the various lecture courses on the history of philosophy. However, Hegel's manuscript for the Introduction to the lecture course of 1820 demands our special attention.¹¹ There Hegel states that the key to resolving the contradiction at issue is that "the philosophical knowledge of what both truth and what philosophy are allows us to know this diversity itself as such in a totally different sense than that in accordance with the abstract opposition of truth and falsity" (GW, 18, 44/V 6, 20 [15a]). The key to our problem then is clear: we must gain the philosophical knowledge both of what truth is and of what philosophy is. As we shall see, this resolution will necessarily lead us back to the question of the relationship between the experiential and the speculative proofs of the system.

What then is this philosophical knowledge about truth and about philosophy itself? And how can this knowledge reconcile the oneness and eternity of truth with the historical diversity of philosophical systems? Hegel's answer revolves around the concepts of concreteness and necessity.

Hegel argues that the threat of skepticism arises prompted by the diversity of philosophical systems, as the result of an abstract conception of truth. The claim that truth is one, that it is an invariant identity, is certainly correct, but it is nonetheless a wholly vacuous and formalistic conception. What it fails to capture, for Hegel, is precisely the inherent concreteness of truth.

To be concrete is to be determinate, to possess specificity and density, to have depth, richness, and fullness. It is to be, in a phrase, a singular articulated whole. Now the concreteness of a concept can be achieved in two ways for Hegel. A concept could be contrasted with, or, more properly, opposed to some other concept such that each of the opposed relata depends on the other for its own identity. This is the primary concern of the philosophical science of logic. However, a concept could also become concrete by being embodied in some particular substance. It would appear, at least initially, as it does to ordinary consciousness, that the latter form of gaining determinacy would be a richer source of concreteness than the former. Hegel, of course, argues that they are in fact mutually dependent. The concreteness that results from conceptual distinction enables the intrinsic identity of a concept to emerge precisely in its mutual dependence on that concept specifically opposed to it. This in itself, to be sure, still remains abstract, a mere empty universality. Thus, for it to be more determinate, a concept and that to which it is opposed must both be embodied in that which is opposed to universality as a whole, namely the domain of particularity. But the determinacy possessed by such things in the order of being depends precisely

on the categorial determinacy of the concepts they embody, and the determinacy of the categorial, the universal, in turn, itself depends on its being embodied in and through that which is other than it, namely the particular. As a result, the dependent opposition, both of concepts with respect to one another and of the universal with respect to the particular, thus gives to each the concreteness they require. Hegel therefore defines concreteness as the union of universality and particularity in the singularity of fully determinate actuality, or as he says in the lecture course, “something is concrete that contains in itself not only its own one immediate determination, but its own other as well” (GW, 18, 47/V 6, 23 [16b]).

Hegel draws two conclusions from this line of argumentation. First, the inherent concreteness of truth means this concept must be embodied in the domain of particularity, and this can be nothing other than the order of contingency, the realm of history, the sphere of the temporal. Truth, the object of philosophy, must appear then in the domain of semblance (*Schein*). Secondly, the concreteness of truth also means that it bears an essential relation to that which is other than it, namely falsity. As Hegel has shown, this conceptual opposition, in the order of the universal, must become actual, i.e., embodied in the domain of the particular. At the conceptual level, truth on its own is insufficient, as is falsity. Each in itself lacks what it requires for it to be itself, i.e., each suffers negativity. Accordingly, truth and falsity each bear an essential need to be in relationship to that which opposes it and this need to become determinate in and through opposition must itself become actual. This is what Hegel means when he says that “the true, thus determinate in itself, has the drive (*Trieb*) to develop itself” (GW, 18, 47/V 6, 24 [17a]). Consequently, because truth is concrete, it must appear in the domain of history, and this appearance must be a course moved by the drive to develop in and through the opposition between truth and falsity. The concreteness of truth thus entails its historical formation and the history of philosophy is nothing other than a record of its course.

However, a rather formidable problem arises at this juncture. To demonstrate that truth must develop in the order of the temporal is not yet to say that there is an intrinsic necessity to this development. Hegel claims that the conflictual nature of the historical embodiment of truth guarantees only that there must be succeeding stages in its occurrence in actuality, that the generative force of such history is the “drive to develop” endemic to the concept of truth itself. But this does not entail that the temporal succession will follow a necessary path, that it will be a rational process, that it will, in short, be a movement of progressive development towards some ultimate aim. Nothing within the domain of time, in fact, could establish that the succession of philosophical systems will conform to any sort of necessity other than the simple sequential ordering provided by time itself. And yet,

Hegel tells us, reason requires not only that truth appear in history, and that this appearance be conflictual, it also demands that the temporal order obey the necessity of development that governs the order of conceptual progression. Only then could such a history show itself to be rational, rather than a mere random movement of constant battle between truth and falsity. Only then would the contradiction at the core of the history of philosophy have finally been resolved. But if the establishment of such necessity cannot be produced from the order of time, how can it be shown?

In answering this question, Hegel uncovers a dependence that he argues must be operative in the construction of any sort of scientific history. "There must from the start," he tells us, "be a rational belief (*vernünftiger Glaube*) that contingency (*Zufall*) does not govern human affairs; and it is the matter of philosophy to know that so far as its own appearance in history is historical, this is only determined through the Idea" (GW, 18, 51/V 6, 29 [20a]). This belief incorporates all the claims that have been operative in the resolution of the antinomy of the history of philosophy: that truth is inherently concrete, that as such it has a drive to develop, and that the course of such a succession is governed by the necessity of conceptual development. As a result, its justification cannot be accomplished by appeal to the domain of history itself. Its justification is precisely the task of the science of philosophy. It is a rational belief to the extent that philosophy is able to establish its validity independently of any appeal to experience. This assumes that philosophy is itself capable of being wholly self-justifying. This then is why Hegel said that the philosophical knowledge about what philosophy is, and not just what truth is, is the key to resolving the contradiction at issue. And it is this recognition—that the history of philosophy rests on a belief that no discipline within the order of representation can establish—that ultimately determines, for Hegel, the relationship between the experiential and speculative proofs of the system.

Conclusion

Let us return now to the question with which we began by recalling the claim that served as our point of departure: "the same development of thinking that is presented in the history of philosophy is presented in philosophy itself, but freed from that historical externality, purely in the element of thinking" (*Enz.* [1827], §14). The context that we have been able to reconstitute for this statement teaches two basic lessons.

The first is that although the history of philosophy indeed operates in the domain of externality, it nevertheless serves a quite crucial and special function within Hegel's thought. It is the system's experiential proof. It is

nothing less than a testing and validation of the systematicity of reason precisely in the domain of representation, in the order of time. It demonstrates that the system of science accords with actuality, the “external touchstone.” But why would a self-justifying system require such a proof? Our study has shown that the need for such a demonstration arises precisely as a result of the cultural skepticism concerning the very project of a scientific philosophy. Given that this phenomenon is rooted in an appeal to the apparent irrationality of the history of human inquiry, only a refutation of this appearance from within the domain of semblance can adequately alleviate such doubt and, in so doing, establish the very possibility of such a project. A genuinely rational history of philosophy thus justifies reason’s systematic character before the court of ordinary consciousness, and it does so in a way that no other histories could do, neither those of art, nor those of religion. For only the scientific history of philosophy is the history of the necessary formation of thought, and only such a history as this could reconcile reason as it is most fundamentally, i.e., as thought, with reason as it exists.

Nonetheless, despite these important achievements, we must heed this study’s second lesson: that the speculative and the experiential must not be confused. Only the system’s circularity, the self-justification of reason, can ultimately establish the systematic character of reason to the satisfaction of reason itself. The experiential proof is only possible under the governance of the system, only the system can establish the rational belief upon which the history of philosophy stands, and, as such, it of necessity presupposes the speculative proof of the system. *Nachdenken*, as Hegel reminds us, must always rest upon *spekulative Denken* (cf. *Enz.* [1827], §9). Thus, when the system finally does circle back on itself, reason’s most basic demand—that it become its own object—is met. This movement, as Hegel says, “finds itself already completed, when at its conclusion philosophy grasps its own concept, i.e., it only looks back (*zurücksieht*) on its knowledge (*Wissen*)” (*Enz.* [1827], §573). For this to occur is for thought to unite itself to the process of knowing, in and through which it becomes determinate. Philosophy’s looking back on itself is not philosophy’s grasping of its own heritage, its own history, but rather thought’s looking back onto its path of formation, and, for Hegel, this is nothing other than the system of concepts that form philosophical science itself.

What then is the relationship of the history of philosophy to the system of philosophical science? The calm and deliberate time in Berlin may not really have been so far away from the turbulent and explosive days of Jena. The history of philosophy stands perhaps in the same place as the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*: the path of experience is the way to science that must itself already be science.

Notes

1. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1817), ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Klaus Grotzsch, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 13 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), § 10A [Anmerkung]. All further references to this work are included in the text designated as 'Enz. [1817]' followed by the appropriate paragraph number, or, where necessary, the appropriate page number.

2. For this claim, see Hegel's manuscript for the introduction to the lectures he delivered on this topic in Berlin in 1820: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816–1831)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 18 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995), 48 [Ms. 1820, 18a], *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Teil 1. Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie. Orientalische Philosophie*, ed. Pierre Garnion and Walter Jaeschke, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Bd. 6 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), 25 [Ms. 1820, 18a]. All further references to this manuscript are included in the text, the former edition, designated as 'GW 18,' followed by the latter edition, designated as 'V 6,' each followed by the appropriate page number. I also provide the manuscript pagination common to both editions.

For similar statements, see the following student transcripts of the lecture courses: V 6, 25 [Kolleg, 1820–21, 3], 117 [Kolleg, 1819], 220 [Kolleg, 1825–26], & 293–294 [Kolleg, 1827–28].

For an important examination of the various editions and extant manuscripts of these lecture courses, both those included in the *Vorlesungen* edition cited above, as well as those left out, see Dietmar Köhler, "Hegels *Vorlesungen über Geschichte der Philosophie. Anmerkungen zur Editionsproblematik*," *Hegel-Studien* 33 (1998): 53–83.

3. For different treatments of Hegel's account of the place of the history of philosophy within the system of philosophy, see W. H. Walsh, "Hegel on the History of Philosophy," *History and Theory Beiheft* 5 (1965): 67–82; A. Robert Caponigri, "The Pilgrimage of Truth Through Time: The Conception of the History of Philosophy in G. W. F. Hegel," in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph J. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, and Frederick G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 1–20; Remo Bodei, "Die 'Metaphysik der Zeit' in Hegels *Geschichte der Philosophie*," in *Hegels Logik der Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 79–98; Martial Gueroult, *Dianoématique. Bk. I: Histoire de L'histoire de la philosophie*, vol. 2: *En Allemagne de Leibniz a nos jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1988), 427–465; Félix Duque, "Le temps du logos—Considérations sur la place systématique de l'histoire de la philosophie chez Hegel," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch 1997. Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophiegeschichte. Erster Teil*, ed. Andreas Arndt, Karol Bal, and Henning Ottmann (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 83–89; and Christophe Bouton, "L'histoire dont les événements sont des pensées: Hegel et l'histoire de la philosophie," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 98 (2000): 294–317.

4. For a discussion of several historical and contemporary attempts to resolve this contradiction, see Vittorio Hösle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Studien zur Struktur*

der Philosophiegeschichte unter paradigmatischer Analyse der Entwicklung von Parmenides bis Platon (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984).

5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1827), ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 19 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), §14. All further references to this work are included in the text designated as 'Enz. [1827]' followed by the appropriate paragraph number, or where necessary, the appropriate page number.

6. In both versions, this requirement leads Hegel to note the problematic status of the account of philosophy that he is providing in the Introduction. It can be at best, as he says in the 1817 Introduction, "indeterminate, tentative, and historical" (Enz. [1817], §4), or still more forcefully in the 1827 formulation, "unphilosophical" and as such a mere "tissue of presuppositions, assurances, and argumentations, i.e., of contingent assertions, against which the opposite assurances could be made with the same right" (Enz. [1827], § 10).

For a useful discussion of the concept of circularity in Hegel's work, see Tom Rockmore, *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).

7. In an otherwise penetrating study of Hegel's relationship to skepticism, Michael Forster fails to notice that not only is skepticism, in both its ancient and modern forms, an historical philosophical system—a fact he discusses at great length and quite well—but that it is also Hegel's underlying motive for engaging in a history of philosophy in the first place. See his *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

For examinations of the problem of the self-justification of reason as a response to the threat of skepticism, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft. Eine Studie zu Zielen und Motiven des Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1991); and Michael Baur, "The Role of Skepticism in the Emergence of German Idealism," in *The Emergence of German Idealism*, ed. Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 63-91.

8. For an overview of the specific intellectual context within which Hegel took up the problem of a history of philosophy, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Selbsterkenntnis der Vernunft. Zu Hegels Verständnis von Philosophiegeschichte," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch 1997. Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophiegeschichte. Erster Teil*, 46–54. For broader accounts, see Johannes Freyer, *Geschichte der Geschichte der Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: R. Voigtländer, 1911); Lutz Geldsetzer, *Die Philosophie der Philosophiegeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anon Hain, 1968) esp. Part I; Lucien Braun, *Histoire de L'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Editions Ophrys, 1973), esp. ch. 5 & 6; and Martial Gueroult, *Dianoématique. Bk. I: Histoire de L'histoire de la philosophie, vol. 2*.

9. Hegel tells us that the matters at issue here are such problems as the nature of the soul, the world, and God, as well as the concerns of ethical conduct and religious conviction.

10. Rockmore in general dismisses what I have called here the experiential proof of the system (cf. *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, 84–102). Thus, in his account of circular justification and the history of philosophy, he focuses on how this structure differs from or is anticipated by the various accounts of justification given by the other philosophers that Hegel discusses or to which he alludes (cf. ch. V). He therefore never gives serious consideration to the relationship between the inherent circularity of the system and the demand of reason that such a system accord with experience, that historical actuality be shown to be inherently rational.

11. There are two reasons for this: one philological, the other philosophical. Although Hegel never himself published this text, and thus it cannot be accorded the same status as his published writings, it nonetheless is in his own hand and as such must be given preference over the student transcriptions of the oral presentations. Secondly, this text contains Hegel's most precise formulation of his resolution to the contradiction at the core of the history of philosophy.

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Chapter 10

Is There Progress in the History of Philosophy?



Vittorio Hösle

Hegel's philosophy of the history of philosophy probably can be regarded as the part of his system most neglected today in the Anglo-Saxon world. To give only three examples: in the four volume *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, edited by R. Stern,¹ in the two-volume *Hegel*, edited by D. Lamb,² as well as in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, edited by F. C. Beiser³ one does not find even one article dedicated specifically to Hegel's philosophy of the history of philosophy. One important exception to this neglect is the volume with the proceedings of the second biennial conference of the Hegel Society of America of 1972 at the University of Notre Dame,⁴ and so I am particularly glad that after twenty-eight years the Hegel Society of America has returned to this topic. I am grateful for the publication of the present volume for two reasons, a subjective and an objective one. First, in my own country, the study of Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy has always played an important role, from their publication in 1833–1836 up to today. One needs only to read the first subchapter in K. Düsing's book *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie*⁵ in order to see how much has been written about them, particularly in German-speaking countries, both in the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries. But of course what determines the value of a work is not so much the amount of its reception, but its intrinsic merits.

Now there are indeed good arguments for the position that, first, Hegel's philosophy of the history of philosophy is an integral, perhaps even the culminating part of his system and that, second, the discipline of the philosophy of the history of philosophy is a very important discipline of philosophy, even if it is almost nonexistent in the analytical tradition (a fate it shares with hermeneutics and philosophical anthropology). This is even more de-

plorable, since even the most excellent work on some author in the history of philosophy lacks a broader perspective when it is not linked to the larger historical context to which the argument or the thinker relates. With regard to the first claim, on which I cannot focus here, I want only to state that Hegel's philosophy is built around different forms of reflexivity, and so it must be that philosophy itself forms the last category of the system. Since a further fundamental idea of Hegel's is that final truth must be encompassing, i.e., must contain alternative theories as moments of itself, Hegel cannot simply ignore the history of philosophy antecedent to him; he must try to show that it is somehow present in his own philosophy. The desire of finding rationality in reality must apply in a particular degree to that entity that looks for rationality in reality, namely, philosophy itself; and its history must be shown not to be an argument against, but one for, the truth of one's own philosophy. This must be the case if earlier positions are not simply errors—for this would inevitably raise the question of whether one's own theory is not an error as well—but partial truths and necessary steps on the way to one's own philosophy. In a certain sense, one may say that Hegel's system, the *Encyclopedia* and the elaboration of some of its parts in the *Science of Logic*, the *Philosophy of Right*, and in the lectures, has to be read twice—once as a general theory of reality, and a second time as the final part of reality dealt with in the discipline of the philosophy of the history of philosophy.

However, as already indicated above, this essay will not aim at an exegesis of Hegel's system.⁶ Rather, the focus here lies in discussing the systematic question, central to all philosophy of the history of philosophy, whether there is a progress in the history of philosophy. To do this in a responsible way, one has to consider the earlier history of the discipline, and there is little doubt that Hegel figures prominently in it. He is not the first to have worked in the field—reflections belonging to the philosophy of the history of philosophy go back at least to Plato—but he is the first philosopher who can claim to have offered a philosophical theory corroborated by a remarkably knowledgeable overview of the whole history of philosophy. Hegel was, indeed, even the first great philosopher who was also an original historian of philosophy. In what follows, I will first discuss the main approaches in the philosophy of the history of philosophy, with particular attention to the problem of how they relate to the question of progress in the history of philosophy; and second, I will propose some of my own reflections on the matter.⁷

The Different Positions in the Philosophy of the History of Philosophy

If we try to subdivide, in a Hegelian manner, the different positions that may be taken with regard to the relation of philosophy to its history, a natural

subdivision would be, first, a philosophy that ignores its history; second, an obsession with the history of philosophy that paralyzes systematic philosophy; and, third, an interest in the history of philosophy based on a philosophical concern. The first approach is particularly tempting at times in which a philosopher claims to have made a methodological revolution that transforms all anterior philosophy into mere prehistory: Descartes and Wittgenstein are good examples. Just as a chemist aiming at new discoveries should not waste his time with the study of the history of alchemy, so—these philosophers think—a systematic philosopher ought to ignore the pre-scientific stages of his own discipline. Of course, the plausibility of this stance depends, first, on the quality of the new discovery and, second, on the degree to which fundamental parts of philosophy are linked to this discovery. With regard to the first point, the main objection is quite obvious. Since the irreducible plurality of different philosophical positions is a fact hard to deny, and there have been many claims to having finally found the decisive starting point that later nonetheless proved as unable to stop philosophical dissension as earlier and more primitive stages of philosophy have, the skeptical question follows: why should anyone think that their own philosophical proposal would have a fate different from those other proposals that have been eventually surpassed? The suspicion that the feet of those who will carry us out are already at the door will befall all persons who are able to observe themselves from a certain distance.⁸ Even if we concede that certain new discoveries are definitive, as may be the case with some parts of logic, we can easily counter that only when the discovery is still fresh does the author succumb to overrating its importance; after some length of time, one usually recognizes that, even if it is true that the older positions may, or even must, be formulated with more precision, it is not the case that the new logical tools as such are able to prove or even to confute some of the basic “isms” earlier developed.

These reflections suggest the second position, which deduces the impossibility of timeless insights by systematic philosophy from the way the history of philosophy has worked until now. In continental philosophy, particularly in its German and Italian versions, a skepticism motivated by a profound knowledge of the history of philosophy has been widespread during the whole twentieth century. However, long ago, Hellenistic skepticism used the plurality of philosophical opinions as a strategy to justify its doubts, and the same argument can even be found in such an early text as Gorgias's philosophical treatise.⁹ With the emergence of modern historicism and the development of a sophisticated discipline dedicated exclusively to the study of the history of philosophy, the attractiveness of this position has increased; and, in fact, it exercises a strong fascination for all persons who have dedicated much of their time to the study of the history of philosophy. Certainly one of the major representatives of this historically motivated skepticism is

Wilhelm Dilthey. The central idea behind his essays (collected in vol. VIII of the critical edition with the title *Weltanschauungslehre, Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Philosophie*)¹⁰ is that there is an incurable contradiction between the universal claim of every philosophical system and the historicist view. Each system makes arbitrary presuppositions and what we can and should do is look for the causes that determine the choice of a particular presupposition by an individual thinker. The search for causes instead of reasons characterizes all reductionistic approaches, be they interested, as in Marxism, in economic or, as in existentialism, in individual, psychic causes. One of the subtlest forms of history of philosophy based on the belief that the category of truth is of no use in the discipline is defended by Martial Guérout, who thinks that the criteria for evaluating philosophical systems are of an aesthetic nature. Philosophies are artworks, attractive through the beauty of their architecture, but not convincing through their truth.¹¹

The problems of this position are not less serious than those of the first, and there are at least three. First, in order to criticize another position, it is of obvious importance to reconstruct its presuppositions. One of these presuppositions, in the case of the historically motivated skepticism, is certainly the following belief: if a position has been substituted in history by another, then it cannot be true. For otherwise, the fact that a position has been given up would not be sufficient to reject it. Now, a connection between being substituted and being false can be assumed only if there is a progress in history; otherwise, a valid position may have been given up again and again on no good grounds. It is probably surprising to see that radical historicism, which usually rejects the idea of progress in the history of philosophy, in fact presupposes it, if it wants us to take it seriously—which it has to do also for the second, very simple reason that it must regard itself as the *telos* of the history of philosophy. At least it must pride itself on the overcoming of earlier errors. Third, historically motivated skepticism makes one presupposition that can be turned against itself. For if a position has to be regarded as confuted because it has been substituted by another in the course of philosophy, then also skepticism itself has to be regarded as confuted; for the most manifold forms of skepticism (and, as we have seen, also of historically motivated skepticism) have already occurred in the history of philosophy. In short, if one regards the great “isms” as failed, because they have been replaced again and again in the history of philosophy, then the same verdict applies to skepticism; it simply cannot claim to hold a position above the other “isms,” because it is itself one of them. Nor can a skeptically motivated history of philosophy even claim to grasp the subjective intentions of the philosophers of the past, for the basic feature of those intentions was the orientation towards truth, and one misses even the subjective quality of such intention if one renounces the commitment to truth.

If skepticism cannot be justified, at least not by reflections on the history of philosophy, then another solution to the problem of the relation between philosophy and its history has to be sought. Again, there are a variety of positions that take the history of philosophy seriously as a philosophical problem, without embracing skepticism; but perhaps not all of them are equally well grounded. The first and easiest way to find order and structure in the history of philosophy is to assume that it is determined by progress; the second is the typological approach; the third recognizes cyclical structures in the history of philosophy. One is well advised to distinguish within the first approach between linear and dialectic progress. According to the first form, progress consists in the accumulation of single insights, while according to the second, the final position is a "synthesis," an attempt at mediation between two opposite stances. In between these two positions, one may locate the theory that the history of philosophy consists of a continuous process of increasing alienation from truth.

The theory according to which the history of philosophy is determined by linear progress can be traced back to Aristotle and can be found in many of the famous philosophers before the twentieth century, while in our century it is Nicolai Hartmann who has defended it most vigorously.¹² The model for this interpretation of the history of philosophy is the history of science. As, in general, a later physical theory is assumed to be closer to truth than an earlier one, so also a later philosophical position is regarded as better than an earlier one. The main objection against this model is, however, that it simply does not render justice to the facts. It is quite obvious that the history of philosophy cannot be written in the same way as the history of science, since it is closer to the history of art, even if this does not entail that the central category in its evaluation is beauty instead of truth. Indeed, there is an important argument from the nature of philosophy itself that explains why the history of philosophy cannot be similar to the history of science. In fact, even the history of science is less linear than one likes to think. Recall Thomas S. Kuhn's argument that the transition from an old paradigm to a new one can be measured only with difficulty against a common standard that, in the case of normal science, is the paradigm itself. Still paradigm changes in science are quite rare. Philosophy, however, is in a permanent process of paradigm change, for it cannot presuppose concepts and rules to the same degree as science does because it simply belongs to its essence to question them. For philosophy does not have its own realm of being to study; rather, it is the systematic investigation of the principles of all realms of being and, therefore, constitutionally unable to function like normal science. To go back to the model of linear progress, of course, one may pick out opinions from the tradition that one then may regard as predecessors of one's own and thus see a progress in the history of philosophy towards oneself; and

one is facilitated in doing so, if one distinguishes, as Hartmann does, between thinking in problems and thinking in systems. But the problem with this approach is that an opposite position may do the same and find as many predecessors—both the realist and the idealist, both the theist and the atheist have a lot of predecessors. Furthermore, Hartmann's distinction neglects the fact that the peculiar nature of a problem is sufficiently intelligible only in the respective system. It is true that the search for systematicity may do violence to the analysis of a single problem, but it is no less true that philosophy cannot help aiming at a system, as difficult as that may be, if it does not want to give itself up.

However, still worse than the model of continuous progress is that of continuous regress, which seems to be somehow implied by Martin Heidegger's reflections on the whole of Western philosophy. For not only is it as eclectic as that based on linear progress—Heidegger chastises the heralds of modern subjectivity and ignores the critics of it among modern philosophers—but it cannot explain at all why its own position could emerge after millennia of decadence. The teleologization towards one's own position may often be naïve, but it is still better than that antiteleology which, by devaluating one's predecessors, necessarily endangers one's own position.

Far more satisfying is the position that defends the idea of progress but simultaneously recognizes the existence of a variety of different, even opposite, philosophical systems that somehow have to be mediated. In modernity, it is Kant who can claim to have sketched such a conception.¹³ For Kant, criticism is a synthesis of dogmatism and skepticism (an idea one also still finds in Husserl),¹⁴ which means that skepticism is not at all the final stance, but only a position one has to cross to overcome it. But of course it is Hegel who succeeded in elaborating these ideas into a complex theory. What are the essential features of the theory of the mature Hegel? (The young Hegel's remarks on the history of philosophy have to be ignored here, as they are quite different from the later position. In his early essay on the difference between Fichte's and Schelling's philosophies, Hegel rejects the idea of progress and compares great philosophies with artworks).¹⁵ First, Hegel believes that the history of philosophy can be dealt with appropriately only by systematic philosophy, since the selection of the material presupposes one's own judgment about its relevance, and such a judgment cannot be done by a historian proper who is not familiar with the specific philosophic merits of the objects of the history of philosophy. Second, Hegel insists on a necessity within the history of philosophy, that at least in its main structures it could not have developed otherwise. This claim is certainly difficult to defend in a time that disposes of modal concepts quite different from those used by Hegel. This is not the occasion to try to reconstruct Hegel's theory of modalities; suffice it to say, first, that of course Hegel does not mean that every theory about an

alternative world with a different course in the history of philosophy is contradictory and, second, that his concept of necessity can be paralleled with success to Leibniz's concept of moral necessity. Both thinkers believe that the actual world is as it is because it represents more value (Leibniz) or more dialectic rationality (Hegel) than all possible alternatives and is in this sense necessary. Hegel seems to think, on the one hand, that, in a history of philosophy that can claim to manifest rationality, as many thought systems as possible have to be played through, and, on the other hand, that there must be an argumentative nexus between the different positions. A later philosophy renders hidden presuppositions of an earlier one explicit, and thus engenders a new system. The development from one position to another is intelligible, insofar as there is, third, fundamentally one substance of them all, namely absolute spirit. For Hegel, the unity of philosophical discourse is something ontologically at least as stable as the unity of a single mind; and as in the case of the biography of an individual, we do not rest till we find a chain that links the different steps of her intellectual career, so also in the case of the history of philosophy as a whole we must search for that principle that unfolds itself in its development. This principle according to Hegel is, fourth, the absolute idea, which—differently, e.g., from Plotinus' One—is concrete; and its various moments are at the basis of philosophical systems in their unilaterality and opposition. This explains why the history of philosophy differs so profoundly from the history of science.

In his manuscript of 1823 Hegel writes:

Bei einer Wissenschaft wie die Mathematik hat die Geschichte, was den Inhalt betrifft, vornehmlich nur das erfreuliche Geschäft, Erweiterungen zu erzählen. . . . Die Geschichte der Philosophie dagegen zeigt weder das Verharren eines zusatzlosen einfachern Inhalts, noch nur den Verlauf eines ruhigen Ansetzens neuer Schätze an die bereits erworbenen; sondern sie scheint vielmehr das Schauspiel nur immer sich erneuernder Veränderungen des Ganzen zu geben. . . .¹⁶

Since the absolute idea is dialectically structured, one cannot be surprised that different philosophical systems relate to each other as thesis and antithesis; in fact, since philosophy may not presuppose anything, because it is an essentially holistic enterprise, opposite worldviews have to be tried so that at the end a synthesis of them may emerge. In the "*Vorbegriff*" of the Berlin edition of the encyclopedic logic (§§26–78 of the third edition), Hegel discusses the three "*Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*," the three general determinations of the relation of thought to reality, to which the main philosophies of early modernity correspond.

Unfortunately, however, in the lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel defends, fifth, a further thesis, namely that of the correspondence of the categories of his logic with the main systems of the history of philosophy. In the manuscript of 1820, we read: "Nach dieser Idee behaupte ich nun, daß die Aufeinanderfolge der Systeme der Philosophie in der *G e s c h i c h t e d i e s e l b e* ist als die *A u f e i n a n d e r f o l g e* in der logischen *A b l e i t u n g* der Begriffsbestimmungen der Idee."¹⁷ This thesis, obviously untenable and subjected to a sagacious criticism already in 1849 by A. L. Kym,¹⁸ contributed to discrediting Hegel's theory, despite the fact that his other basic tenets do not entail it and that Hegel turns rarely enough to it in the course of his analysis of the concrete history of philosophy.

Much more dangerous, because directed against the heart of his theory, is a further objection. Hegel believes not only in the rationality of the history of philosophy, but also in progress. But how can a Hegelian relate to the history of philosophy after Hegel? I do not have in mind the notorious problem of how Hegel imagined the state of philosophy after himself, for even if one can find in Hegel some assertions that seem to entail that philosophy had come to an end with him, the general problem exists for every other philosopher as well and is by its very nature insoluble. For if a philosopher knows already in his lifetime which new thoughts will be developed fifty years after his death, then these thoughts will have been developed not after his death, but during his life. What I have in mind is the fact that the post-Hegelian philosophy differs on the whole quite profoundly from Hegel's own and that it is difficult to believe both in progress and in Hegel's system. But if this is so, not only has the post-Hegelian history of philosophy by itself confuted the Hegelian project, but also the attempt of any Hegel renaissance is, according to Hegel, an epigonal effort doomed to fail.

Deswegen leben wohl DIE PLATONISCHE, A r i s t o t e l i s c h e u s f. Philosophie immer und gegenwärtig; aber in dieser Gestalt und Stufe, auf der die Platonische, Aristotelische Philosophie war, ist die Philosophie nicht mehr. Es kann deswegen heutigentages keine P l a t o n i k e r, A r i s t o t e l i k e r, S t o i k e r, E p i k u r ä e r m e h r g e b e n.¹⁹

With regard to the specific field of the philosophy of the history of philosophy, it may seem that we have already lost too much of our time in discussing Hegel's theory.

We saw before that historically motivated skepticism and relativism presuppose, in order to be reasonable, a progress in the history of philosophy. Now we see that, vice versa, the belief in a progress in the history of philosophy entails relativism. The two positions most opposed to each other—relativism and the theory of progress—seem thus to be equivalent, and it

seems a matter of indifference which one we choose. However, the relation of the two positions is not a symmetric one, for the theory of progress entails relativism not generally, but only for a time like ours in which relativism is the domineering position. With regard to Hegel's theory, furthermore, one has to recognize that it does not consist only of the tenet assuming progress, and while this has to be given up or at least modified, the other tenets may still be defended. At least we have found no arguments against the idea that the history of philosophy forms an intelligible unity, that there is a plausible order in it, that it is determined by dialectic structures, and that some positions—the synthetic ones—are privileged with regard to others. If we are now looking for alternatives to the theory of progress, we find, second, the typological approach. The central idea behind this approach is that there are certain "isms" that seem perennial and to recur during the whole history of philosophy. Indeed, this has been one of the major objections against Hegel's philosophy of the history of philosophy.²⁰

The attempts to classify the different main types of philosophy have been manifold; one could even interpret Hegel's three "*Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*" in this direction. Probably the most elaborate proposals stem from A. Trendelenburg,²¹ W. Dilthey,²² L. Stein,²³ K. Groos,²⁴ and S. C. Pepper.²⁵ I will not now discuss their various ways of classifying the diverse philosophies—the first three differ less from each other than it seems at first glance—but mention only the fundamental problems linked to this approach. First, it shares the general difficulty of each classification—what is the criterion of subdivision? Dilthey is naive when he thinks that his subdivision is based on experience (while Trendelenburg tries to solve the problem with an *a priori* reflection), since modern epistemology has shown clearly enough that empiricism with regard to concepts works as little as with regard to propositions. Second, most typologists—not, however, Trendelenburg—are relativists; they think that all types are equally unjustifiable. However, the problem of such a view, which claims to stand above all the others, is that it is has to be subsumed under one type if the classification is indeed complete. Stein, e.g., recognizes relativism as one type to which he himself belongs, but if so, then the typologist cannot claim that all types are equally justified, for since he regards his metaposition as superior, the type to which it is related has to be considered as superior as well. Obviously, this cannot be an argument in favor of relativism; rather it is an argument against indifference with regard to the truth claim of the various types and, therefore, against relativism. Third, the typological approach is surprisingly ahistorical. Even if it is right in averring that the fundamental types return again and again in the history of philosophy, it neglects the historical conditions that foster the rise of a peculiar type. If a philosophical system emerges from the discussion of contemporary alternatives, then it is probable that a philosophical type reappears again and again, but always under certain specific

historic constraints. This leads to the third approach, which looks for cyclical structures in the history of philosophy.

The cyclical approach is not very popular nowadays, but it has found several supporters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among the “famous” philosophers, F. Brentano was committed to it,²⁶ but there are other, less well-known representatives: F. Ast,²⁷ who seems to have been the first to develop such a theory; K. Freiherr von Reichlin-Meldegg,²⁸ G. Kafka,²⁹ A. Dempf,³⁰ and K. Schilling.³¹ While some of these authors’ attempts simply cannot be taken seriously, at least Brentano, Reichlin-Meldegg, and Kafka have important insights into the striking similarities among the courses of ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy. Even if the cycles they identify differ in some aspects, they have enough common traits. I will come back later to the concrete shape of the cycle one is best justified in accepting, and will deal now only with structural similarities and differences among the various theories. Even if several of the above-mentioned authors use the metaphor of the circle, of “*Kreislauf*,” it is, first, clear that none wants to deny that there is a progress in the history of philosophy. However, the progress takes place in the form of ascending circles. The metaphor of the spiral is certainly better apt to grasp the essence of this theory than that of the circle; therefore, one should speak of “*helicoid*” instead of “*cyclical*” theories. Second, all such theories, at least those that are not relativistic, face a serious problem when they have to explain why the phase of the cycle they favor is abandoned: whence this reaction against the best rationally justified type of philosophy? Third, among the nonrelativistic theories there is no consensus at all on the issue of which of the phases in the cycle can claim to be the most reasonable. For the Aristotelean Brentano, it is the first of the four phases; for the Kantian Reichlin-Meldegg, the second of three; for the Schelling disciple Ast, the last of three or four phases that represents the most perfect type. This shows, and indeed must not be surprising, that the theory of cycles as such cannot settle the philosophical question of which type is preferable. The theory need not be relativistic, but it can be. However, combined with specific philosophic arguments, as we find them in Hegel’s conception of the history of philosophy, it may still be a viable, perhaps the best, philosophy of the history of philosophy, for it might help us overcome the problem Hegel’s theory encounters when confronted with post-Hegelian philosophy.

Ideas for a New Philosophy of the History of Philosophy

I preface my subsequent reflections with a summary of my brief critical analysis of the various positions that exist in the important, but neglected, discipline of the philosophy of the history of philosophy. First, one has to recog-

nize that the irreducible plurality of philosophies in the course of human history is indeed a problem that ought not to be ignored by systematic philosophy. Second, it is at the same time true that a skepticism that justifies itself with the argument from the history of philosophy is not the appropriate answer to our problem, for the same argument on which it grounds itself—the transitory nature of philosophical positions—can be turned with the same right against itself. Among the positions that try to mediate between systematic philosophy and the history of philosophy, the theory that asserts a progress of philosophy in the course of its history is, third, certainly more attractive than a pessimistic one that sees only a progressive alienation from truth. Teleologization towards oneself may be naive, and moreover you need more than the mere assertion that your position is the hidden aim of history to make such a theory worth considering. But still, such a theory is better than the opposite one that either is incompatible with the inevitable truth claim every theory raises and is thus inconsistent, or has to aver a sudden and inexplicable turn in the history of thought. However, fourth, the progress characteristic of the history of philosophy differs essentially from the progress of the history of science. Based on the nature of philosophy as a discipline that cannot take anything for granted and is, therefore, obliged to think through all possible alternatives and to question again and again basic tenets and concepts, the history of philosophy is not linear like that of the sciences but consists of permanent paradigm changes. This, however, does not entail that the history of the discipline lacks any rationality. The dialectic model, according to which, e.g., the transcendental position is the synthesis of the opposite views of dogmatism and skepticism, is a reasonable attempt to render justice to both, while a linear model usually has to ignore one of the opposite systems. Fifth, it is an obvious fact rightly urged by the typologists that the basic “isms” of philosophy recur again and again in its history. Realism and idealism, rationalism and empiricism, dogmatism, skepticism, transcendentalism, Platonism are positions familiar from most epochs of the history of philosophy. This is not only the result of an observation from outside. The phenomenon of the diverse renaissances shows quite clearly that certain philosophers have felt related to other thinkers from earlier times much more profoundly than to contemporaries. Platonism, for example, recurred in Middle and Neoplatonism, in medieval and Renaissance Platonism, and was regarded as an explicit model during German idealism.³²

Sixth, however, the typologists err not only when they (or some of them) regard the different types as equally justifiable, since they forget that their own approach belongs itself to one of the types analyzed. They are also wrong when, fascinated with recurrences and renaissances, they neglect the immediate historical nexus of the philosophy they are studying. Schelling and Hegel revitalize important ideas of Plato, but there is little doubt that

their philosophy was original and vigorous because it was more than a Plato renaissance due to its evolving from a critical appraisal of Kantianism. A combination of the sense for the continuity of the history of philosophy with the typologists' interest in recurring "isms" is what constitutes the advantage point of cyclical or, better, helicoid theories.

But since there are different such theories, which shall we choose? In what follows, I will outline the theory I elaborated in my above-mentioned first book, which consists of three parts: the first delineating the general theory, mediated by the discussion of possible alternatives; the second analyzing at length what in my view has to be regarded as the first cycle, the development from Parmenides till Plato; the third sketching the main moments of the later cycles, even if in a very programmatic and superficial way.³³

Every helicoid theory of the history of philosophy has to answer at least four questions: First, what are the main phases of each cycle, and what is the criterion for the subdivision? Second, of how many cycles does the history of philosophy consist? Third, can any cycle claim to be a privileged instantiation of the general pattern? Fourth, what distinguishes the different cycles and constitutes progress from one cycle to the other? With regard to the first question, it seems obvious that a merely empirical subdivision is doomed to fail. In general, classifications hardly can be based on experience alone. Of course, colors are important qualities in reality; but it would be an awkward classification of animals which is based on colors. Analogously, it is certainly possible to classify philosophers according to the criterion of whether they are married or not, but it is not a very helpful typology, at least for the purpose we are pursuing here. If one feels committed to the Hegelian program and if one is attracted by the theory of dialectic progress, it is quite clear that the subdivision of the cycle will have to be either triadic or an expansion of the triad.

With regard to the basic categories, the concept of philosophy as an attempt of subjective thought to grasp the essence of reality suggests objectivity, subjectivity, and their union, categories we find already in Ast, Trendelenburg, Reichlin-Meldegg (and in a certain sense in Hegel's three "*Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*"). The basic pattern of the cycle I propose is pentadic: in analogy to Fichte's philosophy of history in *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, I introduce, besides thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, two intermediate positions, one between thesis and antithesis, the other between antithesis and synthesis. How is the fundamental pattern structured with regard to its content? (a) The first position assumes a being existing independent of thought, which, however, can be known by thinking; it is thus realistic, rationalistic, and dogmatic. The fundamental categories with which being is described are positive ones; it is united, eternal, static, hence a positive function of negativity is not acknowledged. The

interest in human subjectivity as well as in history is limited. Ethics is founded in a heteronomous way. Philosophy does not regard it as its task to challenge the established order, particularly its religion. (b) The second position is much more interested in experience than the first one; at least it is explicitly empiricist, whereas the first had been only implicitly. It is strongly interested in nature in its plurality and proposes usually a theory of knowledge as representation, and it may tend to materialism. The abstract rationalism of earlier metaphysics is rejected with good arguments. (c) The difficulty in justifying normative propositions and any necessity on an empirical basis leads to skepticism. Reality is regarded as fundamentally unintelligible; the problems peculiar to a satisfying theory of representation may lead to subjective idealism. The existence of something absolute is usually denied. The basic principle is one's own subjectivity, which has a mission to challenge traditional authorities—philosophy becomes enlightenment. The relativizing power of history is enjoyed. The domineering categories are plurality, difference, contingency, otherness, finitude. (d) The main reasons for the instability of the third position are, first, the performative contradiction in every skepticism that cannot help claiming truth for its own theory but whose content it is to deny the possibility of truth and, second, the inevitable demands of practical reason. In fact, this position is strongly inspired by the latter, and while it may share skepticism with regard to theoretical reason, it rejects it in the field of practical reason. Morality cannot be grounded in something external, but has to have its roots in the autonomy of the subject, which is free insofar, and only insofar, as it follows its own reason. As a strategy to justify its own claims, transcendental arguments are developed, i. e., reflections on the presuppositions of its own activity. (e) The fifth phase—which can be called, with Dilthey, “objective idealism”—tries to mediate the Archimedic point discovered in the earlier phase, namely subjectivity, with a theory of objective reality. Transcendental arguments are no longer regarded as describing only a subjective sphere; they grasp the core of reality that is antecedent both to nature and subjective spirit. A theory of ideal being is essential to objective idealism, which tries to develop, based on it, a philosophy of nature. The political world is seen as impregnated by the ethical principle, not just opposed to it. The dominant categories are now both positive and negative ones and the absolute is conceived as their union.

Which epochs in the history of philosophy correspond to the pattern sketched, which grants past philosophies a far greater actuality than the linear history of science does to past paradigms and which allows us to better understand certain transitions in one cycle by comparing them with analogous ones in another cycle? While earlier helicoid theories saw ancient philosophy as one cycle, I have tried to show that the basic pattern was realized for the first time in the intense era from the pre-Socratics to Plato.

Based on arguments that philosophy proper begins with Parmenides's metaphysical revolution, I have interpreted Eleatism as the "thetic" philosophy, which provoked the task of a mediation of the new ontology with the earlier philosophy of nature: Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the atomists stand for the second phase. The movement of the Sophists represents, of course, the third step and provokes, fourth, the Socratic reaction. Socrates's foundation of practical philosophy is then mediated by Plato with the earlier metaphysics and the philosophy of mathematics and nature of the pre-Socratics. Plato's dialectical ontology of the two principles of the One, borrowed from Eleatism, and the Indefinite Dyad, stemming from Ionic philosophy, is, Socratically enough, called "On the Good." The termination of the first cycle with Plato has the immediate advantage of rendering justice to the feeling, probably experienced by the overwhelming majority of the students of ancient philosophy, of the inferiority of Hellenistic philosophy compared with the classical one.

Much more contentious is my putting Aristotle at the beginning of the second cycle. My arguments were—and I still regard them as valid—that Aristotle's philosophy is characterized by a loss of systematicity compared with Plato's, that he gave up Plato's insight into the irreducibility of the normative dimension, and that in general he grounds philosophy too strongly on the current opinions, while Plato, following Socrates and the Sophists, regards para-doxical (in the literal sense) beliefs as essential for philosophy. The negative moment is simply stronger in Plato (not to speak of the artistic one). But of course I do not intend to deny that Aristotle constitutes a great progress in many fields; and I would add today that he somehow still partakes of the synthetic position. The renaissance of the pre-Socratic philosophies in Hellenism is a sign of a new cycle, with stoa, kepos, and skepticism representing increasingly negative phases of the cycle (the fact that one of the skeptical schools originated in the Academy proves the negativity still present in Platonism). Middle and Neoplatonism are the two attempts (one could almost speak of two half-cycles in Hellenism) to return to the fifth phase, mediated in the case of Middle Platonism by the insight into the self-contradictory nature of skepticism. I recall Philo of Larisa who, however, was of course not a personality and a philosopher at the level of Socrates.

In the Middle Ages, after centuries of domineering Platonism, I see in the reception of Aristotle in the thirteenth century, particularly in Thomas Aquinas, the beginning of a new cycle. The nominalism and the mysticism of the fourteenth century are the antithesis, insofar as they both challenge in very different manners the precarious equilibrium of faith and reason achieved by Aquinas, while the great philosophical synthesis is achieved by Nicholas of Cusa, who integrates the program of founding quantitative natural sciences, the collapse of medieval cosmology, philosophical mysticism,

and Lull's radical rationalism into a form of objective idealism partly inspired by Neoplatonism, partly anticipatory of Hegel's system.

The similarities between modern and ancient philosophy have often been observed. While Descartes clearly represents an anticyclical moment (prompted, though, by the skepticism of the sixteenth century), Spinoza easily can be paralleled with Parmenides, and Leibniz's multiplication of Spinoza's substance is reminiscent of Anaxagoras's analogous operation, even if obviously on a higher level. The empiricist protest against the Eleatics returns in the form of the British empiricists, who in Berkeley give up representationalism and in Hume end with skepticism. The greatest attempt to handle the new situation caused by enlightenment's criticism of traditional morality is, of course, Kant's philosophy, often, and rightly so, compared with Socrates's turn against the sophists. The absolute discovered by Kant is moral self-certainty, which is then mediated by German idealism with the metaphysics of early modernity, now, though, founded on a different level.

Since the cycle of contemporary philosophy is not yet completed, only the first phases are recognizable: the anti-idealist metaphysics of the middle of the nineteenth century (Trendelenburg, Bolzano, Brentano, and, with strong limitations, Marx) provoke the reaction of logical empiricism, whose foundational program in the course of the twentieth century is more and more challenged by skeptical questions. The hope does not seem unjustified that this skepticism also will not be the last position of the cycle.

Is a particular cycle privileged? I think it is quite obvious that only the first can be of paradigmatic clarity, and this for the simple reason that in it phenomena of interference were not yet possible. In the second phase, the position of objective idealism was not yet familiar, while already Hellenistic philosophy, and even more so contemporary philosophy with all the historical knowledge it has accumulated, in principle could go back to earlier philosophical types. Still, it is probable that a renaissance motivated merely historically and not by the spirit of its own time will fail to have an impact on its contemporaries, and where a renaissance is successful, then it is a profound transformation of the type received that is adjusted to the specific questions of the time. On the other hand, the progress that determines the vertical dimension of the spiral inevitably imposes restraints on the phases of the later cycles that may render it more difficult to recognize the repetition of an earlier type.

But if it is true that the history of philosophy consists of such cycles and of the perennial repetition of some fundamental types, why is it still possible to speak of progress? Before we answer this question, a preliminary clarification is indispensable: we have to distinguish between the subjective and the objective level of an achievement. A later scientist usually knows more than an earlier one, but if this earlier scientist developed his own

theory, while the latter only solved some particular problems within that theory, there is little doubt that the earlier one is the greater scientist, even if there has been a progress from him to the latter. It may well be that in philosophy Plato deserves to be regarded as the most creative of all minds, but this does not prevent us from acknowledging that already Aristotle had a broader logical knowledge than Plato or that Hegel had more insights into the structures of social institutions than Plato. In any case, of interest here is the objective progress in the history of philosophy. Of what does it consist?

First, it is quite clear that a living philosophy has to relate to the nonphilosophical knowledge of its time, that scientific knowledge is an important part of it, and that there is a linear progress in the history of science in the broadest sense of the word, i.e., not only in the natural sciences, but also in the social sciences and the humanities. I call this factor the "material one" (in difference from the structural factor). To give an example, if someone is interested in a practical philosophy for today inspired by objective idealism, Hegel's philosophy of right will be an important model for her. But her work can only claim to face the challenge of her own time if she is familiar with the modern ethical discourse, with contemporary jurisprudence, economy, sociology, and history, and if she succeeds in integrating their new material insights in a structure related to that of Hegel's work. It even may be that one will have to defend Kant's strict division of normative and descriptive propositions against Hegel, for nothing guarantees that Hegel's criticism of Kant is always fair, although there are good arguments in favor of the general superiority of objective idealism. However, even if one does not want to oppose Is and Ought in a way that cannot be mediated, this does not entail that one has to confuse the two spheres, as Hegel again and again seems to do.

Second, within the particular sciences, logic can claim a special status. Even if the problem of the foundation of logic cannot be solved by logic itself, the clarification of the nature of entailment is of basic relevance for philosophy committed to arguments, and therefore one can say that as logical empiricism differed from the empiricism of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century by the recognition of the irreducible importance of logic, so also modern forms of objective idealism cannot help being formulated in a way that takes logic far more seriously than in the past. Indeed, the development of analytical philosophy in the last decades has shown that traditional metaphysics and philosophy of religion can be formulated, and with great success, with modern conceptual tools. It was certainly not logic as such that recommended logical positivism.³⁴

Third, a thorough analysis of the history of philosophy cannot neglect the influence of extraphilosophical factors on the course of the history of philosophy. This endangers, however, the autonomy of philosophical dis-

course only to a limited degree, since the three most relevant factors that come to mind—Christianity, modern science, the program of Enlightenment in the specific modern version that alone aims at changing radically the social world—are themselves influenced by new specifically philosophical categories. But where do these come from? I think one has to accept the general thesis shared both by Hegel and Heidegger (even if their evaluation of the process differs radically) that in the course of the history of occidental philosophy (our fourth point) subjectivity has become more and more predominant. Descartes's anticyclical position at the beginning of modernity symbolizes this shift, and already a comparison of Neoplatonism with Platonism shows the increased importance ascribed, on a metaphysical level, to subjectivity. Many of the specific problems of modern philosophy, the body-mind-problem, to name only one, presuppose the capacity of the modern "I" to abstract from everything outside itself, a capacity yet unknown to the ancients.

The theory of the triumph of modern subjectivity, however, has to be corrected in a twofold way. First, if the theory of progress must be combined with the theory of the cycles, one will not be surprised to find a taming of subjectivity in the objective idealism of modern philosophy, Hegel himself being the best, but not the only, example. Second, it seems plausible to assume with K. O. Apel and J. Habermas that in contemporary philosophy the focus on subjectivity is more and more replaced by a new interest in intersubjectivity, which begins to be articulated on a very high level by Hegel, even if he is somehow a transition figure between the two paradigms.

Of course, it is not an accident that I end with Hegel. For even if his philosophy of the history of philosophy teaches us that we can no longer be Hegelians, he remains a towering figure for every person interested in the relation of history and truth: on the one hand because of the complexity and richness of his theory, on the other hand because of the extraordinary position he himself has in the history of modern philosophy. And perhaps the correct, that is, differentiated answer to the question of whether there is a progress in the history of philosophy may also explain why, even if Hegel's philosophy as such is inevitably past, it will be the most important model for the later phases of our cycle.

Notes

1. London/New York: Routledge, 1993.
2. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998.
3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
4. *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. J. O'Malley, K. W. Algozin, and F. G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

5. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1983, 7–16. Another relatively recent German book dealing at least partly with Hegel's theory of philosophy is *Hegels Logik der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984). Of course, the books and essays dedicated to Hegel's analysis and reception of single philosophers in the history of philosophy—not, however, to his general theory of the history of philosophy—are countless.

6. I may mention my book *Hegels System*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987).

7. I follow essentially my book *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Studien zur Struktur der Philosophiegeschichte unter paradigmatischer Analyse der Entwicklung von Parmenides bis Platon* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984), which may be consulted for more detailed argumentation.

8. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes in Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, hg. von E. Moldenhauer und K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969–1971), 3.67. See also *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, *ibid.*, 18. 36 (with allusion to Acts 5.9). The latter passage, which is found in the lectures Hegel held on the history of philosophy, as compiled by Karl Ludwig Michelet, is based on the lecture course of 1823/24, as we can see in the recent critical edition of the single lecture courses (G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vol. 6–9: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, hg. von P. Garniron und W. Jaeschke, 4 parts (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986–96); part 1, 143). Hereafter I quote always from both editions, for Michelet's compilation has had far too great an impact on the discussion of Hegel's theory to be set aside in the future because of the new edition.

9. Cf. Pseudo-Aristoteles, *De Melisso, Xenophane et Gorgia*, 979a14ff.

10. *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VIII (Stuttgart: Tuebner, 1960).

11. See his essay “La légitimité de l'histoire de la philosophie,” in *Archivio di Filosofia* (Milano/Roma 1954): *La filosofia della storia della filosofia*, 39–63.

12. See his essay “Der philosophische Gedanke und seine Geschichte,” in *Kleinere Schriften*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1957), 1–58.

13. See, besides the last section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Die Geschichte der reinen Vernunft,” “Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik,” in Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. XX (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1942), 333–351.

14. *Erste Philosophie* (1923/24), *Erster Teil: Kritische Ideengeschichte*, hg. von R. Boehm (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956) (=Husserliana, vol. VII).

15. *Werke*, 2.17 ff.

16. *Vorlesungen*, part 1, 12 (cf. *Werke*, 18.27 f.); *Lectures on the History of Philosophy I*, trans. E. S. Haldane (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 10: “With a science like Mathematics, history has, in the main, only the pleasing task of recording further additions. . . . The history of Philosophy, on the other hand, shows neither the motionlessness of a complete, simple content, nor altogether the onward movement of a peaceful addition of new treasures to those already acquired. It seems merely to afford the spectacle of ever-recurring changes in the whole. . . .” (Hereafter cited as Haldane.)

17. *Vorlesungen*, part 1, 27 (cf. *Werke*, 18.49). Haldane, 30: “Now in reference to this Idea, I maintain that the sequence in the systems of Philosophy in History is

similar to the sequence in the logical deduction of the Notion-determinations in the Idea."

18. *Hegels Dialectik in ihrer Anwendung auf die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Zürich: Orell, Füssli, und Comp., 1849).

19. *Vorlesungen*, part 1, 49 (cf. *Werke*, 18.65). Haldane, 46: "Hence the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and indeed all philosophies, ever live and are present in their principles, but Philosophy no longer has the particular form and aspect possessed by that of Plato and of Aristotle . . . hence there can be no Platonists, Aristoteleans, Stoics, or Epicureans to-day."

20. Hans Leisegang, e.g., writes that Hegel's grand theory is not compatible with the simple fact,

daß die einander in vielen Motiven widersprechenden Weltanschauungen des Materialismus und Atheismus, der Mystik und des Pantheismus, des Idealismus und Theismus immer wiederkehren und stets dieselbe Struktur zeigen. Nach Hegels Auffassung der Entwicklung dürfte jede von ihnen nur einmal auftreten, um dann in einem höheren Entwicklungszustand des Geisteslebens überwunden und aufgehoben zu sein. Das aber entspricht nicht den historisch überlieferten und noch gegenwärtig zu beobachtenden Vorgängen. Diese zeigen vielmehr, daß sich die Weltanschauungen durch die Jahrhunderte hindurch erhalten in mannigfachen Variationen einiger weniger Themen.

Einführung in die Philosophie (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1953), 121. See also his book *Denkformen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1951), 3.

21. *Über den letzten Unterschied der philosophischen Systeme* (1855); reprint, Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1949. Of earlier attempts, the most noteworthy is: J. M. de Gerando, *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie, relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, 3 vols. (Paris: Chez Henricks, 1804).

22. *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen* (1911), now in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VIII, op. cit., 73–118 (cf. also 119–165).

23. *Philosophische Strömungen der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1908).

24. *Der Aufbau der Systeme—Eine formale Einführung in die Philosophie* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1924).

25. *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948).

26. *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie und ihr augenblicklicher Stand* (1895); a new edition (together with other essays) was published by F. Mayer-Hillebrand (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968).

27. *Grundriß einer Geschichte der Philosophie* (Landshut: J. Thomann, 1807).

28. *Der Parallelismus der alten und neuen Philosophie* (Leipzig/Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1865).

29. *Geschichtsphilosophie der Philosophiegeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1933).

30. *Selbstkritik der Philosophie und vergleichende Philosophiegeschichte im Umriß* (Wien: Thomas Morus Presse, 1947).

31. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (München/Basel: E. Reinhardt, 1953).

32. On the latter see, e.g., the studies by Werner Beierwaltes, in particular *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1972).

33. That is the reason I had left it aside in the Italian translation (Milano: Geurini Associati, 1998). A further problem of the book is that it was so strongly interested in the parallels and similarities between the cycles that it almost ignored their differences; the vertical dimension of the spiral was, although theoretically acknowledged, in reality, despite some general remarks, neglected—a fault I have tried to obviate in a later essay “*Was sind die wesentlichen Unterschied zwischen der antiken und der neuzeitlichen Philosophie?*” in *Philosophiegeschichte und objektiver Idealismus* (München, C.H. Beck, 1996, 13–36). Still, I am now in a much worse position, for I have here at my disposal a few pages for the exposition of a book of almost 800 pages. Many statements will appear ungrounded that perhaps in the book have found a better justification.

34. See G. Gutting, *Pragmatic liberalism and the Critique of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 191, on the differences between picture and theory (which is analogous to that between type and its articulation with the conceptual tools of one's time). While, according to Gutting, theories can be confuted by later developments, the basic pictures cannot, since they can always be repropounded in the form of a more complex theory.

I owe thanks to Peter Martens for correcting my English.

Chapter 11

The “End of History” Revisited: Kantian Reason, Hegelian Spirit, and the History of Philosophy



Jere Paul O'Neill Surber

Hegel's notorious thesis of the “end of history” has generated quite a checkered history of its own. It has played itself out upon a sort of matrix determined by two distinguishable “axes.” One is defined by the question of how broadly this idea should be taken, that is, what its scope of application should be; the other by the weight or seriousness that should be accorded it in the overall context of Hegel's thought. As a brief overview of the contours of this debate,¹ we can say in a general way that most of Hegel's earlier readers and interpreters tended to regard this thesis as one to be taken quite seriously, as central to Hegel's work, while also proposing very broad, though radically divergent, interpretations of its significance. For example, the Young Hegelians (including the young Marx) and the Polish aristocrat Cieszkowski took it as the foundation and launching pad for a practical, action-oriented, and generally optimistic “philosophy of the future.” By contrast, Eduard von Hartmann, under the influence of Schopenhauer, managed to develop out of it the bizarre “imperative” that the ultimate “moral” act of history would be the voluntary mass suicide of the human race, an “end of history” indeed. Opposed to these earlier, more “future-oriented” readings of Hegel's “end of history” was the German Historicist School, which, in one way or another, regarded this thesis as a sort of “regulative idea” specifying the “totality of the past” as the “ideal object” to be reconstructed through the empirical work of the historian. Despite the great diversity among such readings, all were at least agreed that the thesis of the “end of history” was one central to and inseparable from Hegel's systematic thought, a conviction that continued to

be voiced in the twentieth century in the work of A. Kojève and those influenced by him, as well as in certain strands of “poststructuralism” following on Heidegger’s reading of Hegel.

For the most part, however, later interpreters of Hegel, beginning as early as Dilthey and Lotze in Germany, “British Hegelians” such as Bradley, McTaggart, and later Findlay, and “American Idealists” such as Royce, tended to downplay the significance of this thesis for Hegel’s overall philosophical position, if they did not discount or ignore it entirely. While it occasionally made an appearance in subsequent discussions, the tendency was to “localize” it to some particular dimension of Hegel’s thought, such as his particular interpretation of Christian eschatology (Löwith), his attempts to come to grips with the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath (Kojève joins the discussion here as well), or his alleged role as apologist for the Prussian state (Popper is today probably the best-known propagator of this “myth”). It is instructive that both W. Kaufmann’s *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, an early document in the contemporary renaissance of Hegel studies in America, and K. Hartmann’s very influential “non-metaphysical” reading of Hegel’s work as a “theory of categories,” both dating from the mid-1960s, omit any reference to this thesis at all. Finally, by 1996, although not ignored, Hegel’s thesis of the “end of history” came to merit its own chapter in an anthology explicitly devoted to *The Hegel Myths and Legends*.² In general, then, the tendency among later Hegel scholars has been either to deny its significance entirely or, if it be accorded some standing, to equate it (in ways designed variously to support or oppose Hegel’s general philosophical position) with some limited, detachable, or even idiosyncratic aspect of his overall philosophical standpoint.

This essay will offer a reading of Hegel’s views on this issue that ends up granting something to both general ways of approaching it. On the one hand, I will argue that the thesis of the “end of history” must be taken in a quite strong sense and is, in fact, central to Hegel’s overall philosophical standpoint; on the other, I will suggest why this thesis, especially in relation to Hegel’s account of the history of philosophy, is nonetheless a limited one and is neither as counterintuitive, ill-conceived, arrogant, or stultifying, as it has seemed to many. The heart of my argument involves a reconsideration of Hegel’s understanding of and relation to Kant. It will unfold in three stages:

(1) First, I will argue that Hegel (like Fichte before him) viewed Kant as having articulated a fully adequate concept of “system,” but that Kant failed in satisfying the conditions that he himself laid down for this. In his consideration of this systematic issue, Hegel reaffirmed an idea, already suggested by Kant, that Kant’s own notion of the systematization of Reason would in fact signal the “end of history” in a certain limited sense.

However, Hegel also saw that a stronger thesis would be entailed by the additional "non-Kantian" assumptions necessary actually to fulfill Kant's own conditions.

(2) On the basis of this, I will suggest that even Hegel's relatively "stronger version" of the thesis remains limited, in important ways, to the sphere of "Reason," as understood by Kant and developed by Hegel, and cannot be properly attributed beyond this to the realm of "Spirit," at least in the same sense.

(3) I will conclude by considering this interpretation of the "end of history" thesis in relation to Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, a work in which it appears quite prominently and explicitly. When viewed within its proper limits, Hegel's thesis of the "end of history" no more signals the foreclosure of future possibilities for philosophical reflection than it does the continuation of history itself, although it does imply that the intellectual landscape within which these will unfold will have fundamentally altered.

The "End of History" and The Kantian Roots of Hegel's Concept of System

Hegel himself often reminds us, especially by the frequent references to his *Science of Logic* scattered throughout his works, that he should be understood, first and foremost, as a systematic philosopher. Indeed, as he tells us, even more emphatically and frequently than usual, in the "Introduction" to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, his Logic provides the fundamental pre-supposition and underlying rationale for his overall view of history. Representative of these admonitions is:

The logical, and—as still more prominent—the *dialectical* nature of the Idea in general, viz. that it is self-determined—that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains an affirmative, and, in fact, a richer and more concrete shape;—this necessity of its nature, and the necessary series of pure abstract forms which the Idea successively assumes—is exhibited in the department of *Logic*.³

Thus, whatever other collateral factors may have been at work in influencing his view of history and the thesis about its completion, we must look principally to the roots of his conception of a philosophical system to understand this idea, and this leads us immediately back to Kant.

While it is an aspect of Kant's thought that has received relatively little attention in comparison with other more restricted issues presented in the three Critiques, Kant had already stated very emphatically his overall

systematic aims in the Preface to the First Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

In this enquiry I have made completeness my chief aim, and I venture to assert that there is not a single metaphysical problem which has not been solved, or for the solution of which the key at least has not been supplied.⁴

In the following paragraph, he states very clearly the reason for this confidence:

I have to deal with nothing save reason itself and its pure thinking; and to obtain complete knowledge of these, there is no need to go far afield, since I come upon them in my own self.⁵

Lest the reader lose sight of this overarching concern during the laborious journey through the thicket of the work itself, the final major division of the first Critique, entitled "The Transcendental Doctrine of Method," returns to a consideration of exactly this point in much greater detail. There Kant spells out in a more "scientific" manner exactly what he means:

By a system I understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea. This idea is the concept provided by reason—of the form of a whole—in so far as the concept determines *a priori* not only the scope of its manifold content, but also the positions which the parts occupy relatively to one another. The scientific concept of reason contains, therefore, the end and the form of that whole which is congruent with this requirement.⁶

And lest the reader regard the philosophical production of such a system as some ideal, unrealizable, or infinite, goal, Kant even provides a sort of "timetable" in the very last sentence of the first Critique:

If the reader has had the courtesy and patience to accompany me along this path, he may now judge for himself whether, if he cares to lend his aid in making this path into a high-road, it may not *be possible to achieve before the end of the present century* what many centuries have not been able to accomplish; namely, to secure for human reason complete satisfaction in regard to that with which it has all along so eagerly occupied itself, though hitherto in vain.⁷

I have cited Kant at some length here not only because this aspect of Kant's thought is typically slighted, but especially because it makes clear that

Kant himself, well before Hegel emerged on the philosophical scene, saw the idea of an "end of history," at least of a certain sort, as a necessary consequence of his "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy.

Now we know, from such works as his essay on "universal history" of 1784, that Kant himself would have interpreted this notion of an "end of history" as applicable only to the history of metaphysics as understood and practiced prior to his own "Copernican Revolution." In that essay, Kant presents a reworking of the Enlightenment view of history as one of infinite human progress toward the ideal of a reconciliation of nature and freedom through human political and cultural development. While he maintains, on the one hand, that "the history of metaphysics" can be regarded as brought to an "end" with his Critical Philosophy, he asserts, on the other hand, that "human history" remains an "infinite progression" because it and the empirical "subjective" experiences that underlie it⁸ lie outside the scope of what can be demonstrated through rational principles, which alone is the proper business of philosophy.

These two Kantian limitations, of (collective) "universal history" and of (individual) "subjective experience" as not demonstrable from concepts and hence as lying outside the scope of philosophical comprehension, are precisely what Hegel will proceed to challenge. He takes up the former in one of his first distinctly philosophical writings, the so-called *Differenzschrift* (1800/01), though admittedly still in a schematic and relatively "abstract" manner, and the latter in the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). However, it is important to recall at this point what I have already suggested, namely, that the thesis of a "conceptual end or completion of history" was already implied by Kant's Critical Philosophy and the idea of a "philosophical" or "scientific system" within which it is framed.

Hegel's central argument in the *Differenzschrift*, so decisive for all his later thought, is well known.⁹ It is that Kant and later Fichte failed to produce the sort of unified system of reason that they themselves had so clearly described and demanded because they remained always within the standpoint of the understanding (*Verstand*) rather than moving to that of reason (*Vernunft*). Referring to their projects as instances of *Reflexionsphilosophie*, Hegel argued that the production of a unified rational system was continually undermined by the very conceptual oppositions employed by the understanding in attempting to articulate this ever elusive unity of reason itself. Hegel's point, then, was actually quite straightforward: a unified system of reason could only be developed beginning from the unity of reason itself, never from an attempt to "construct" that unity from a standpoint that remained external to and opposed to reason.

From this early critique of "Reflexionsphilosophie," or what might otherwise be called Kantian/Fichtean "transcendental philosophy," Hegel drew

several conclusions important for the present discussion. Because Kant and Fichte developed their own systematic projects from the standpoint of the understanding, they naturally tended to read the history of philosophy itself in terms of a more or less random oscillation of various philosophical viewpoints designed to defend one side or the other of dichotomies constantly being generated by the understanding. In other words, the history of philosophy was, for them, merely a history of errors repeated and compounded. While, from Hegel's point of view, their "Reflexionsphilosophie" did represent a new "standpoint" which allowed them to see this and to diagnose the common source of these "errors" in the natural propensity of reason to go beyond the epistemic limits of the understanding, it at the same time prevented them from remedying this defect precisely because it handed the construction of what *could* do so, namely, a unitary philosophical system, over to the oppositional procedures of the understanding. Put simply, both for their own standpoint and for those of their historical predecessors, any distinctions made by the understanding presupposed the efficacy of the activity of reason in providing the "unity" which could then be differentiated and determined, and it would only be an account of this underlying rational unity, in relation to the various oppositions generated out of it, that could satisfy the conditions which they themselves laid down for a philosophical system.

For Hegel, it immediately followed that the history of philosophy was not, in fact, a random catalogue of mutually offsetting errors, but rather an ordered development of attempts to state, with ever more determination ("concreteness"), the "Truth" of the rational unity that lay at the basis of all of them. As Hegel would later say more specifically about the realm of "Absolute Spirit," all past philosophical viewpoints, historically regarded, had the same "content" but differed in the "systematic forms" of its presentation. While Kant and Fichte had seen what this final "form" must be, and hence had anticipated the "end of the history of philosophy," their view of the relative priority of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* barred them from the articulation of such a unitary system because it dictated that the "content" of philosophy remain bifurcated by the procedures of the understanding. The element of Hegel's strong notion of the "end of history," which he sometimes referred to more precisely as the "end of the history of the Concept," thus followed directly from this logical and systematic critique.

Further, Hegel concluded that, if the various philosophical positions were attempts to express an "identical content" (i.e., the "Truth" or the "Absolute"), but they were arrayed in historical time, then it must be their "historical location" that accounted for the differences in the various "forms" in which this "rational content" was presented. It is important to note that Hegel introduces this discussion with words that could have been taken

almost *verbatim* from those of Kant cited above:

Because in philosophy, Reason, which knows itself, has to do only with itself, its entire work, like its activity, also lies in itself; and, with respect to the inner essence of philosophy, there is neither predecessor nor successor.¹⁰

But, he adds shortly thereafter:

The true originality of a philosophy is the interesting individuality in which Reason has organized a form out of the building material of a particular age; therein the particular speculative reason finds spirit of its spirit, flesh of its flesh, and intuitively itself in it as one and the same and as another living being.¹¹

More than twenty years later, in the Introduction to his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Cf. *LHP*, 50ff.), Hegel will repeat this idea in arguing that philosophy is the "spirit of the time as spirit present in itself." With the same idea in mind, Hegel distinguishes, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, his own "philosophical history" from earlier forms ("original" and "reflective" history). There he writes:

The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the world; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process.¹²

We can therefore say, in summary, that Hegel's argument up to this point consists of the following four theses:

- (1) Since philosophy is *reason* reflecting upon itself, reason both provides its own (conceptual) "content" as well as the "form" in which this "content" must be developed. (This implies the possibility of the sort of "completeness" implicit in the notion of an "end of history" understood as "the history of the Concept.")
- (2) The "complete development" of the "content" of reason in the "form" appropriate to it would constitute the "final philosophical system."
- (3) The *history of philosophy*, rationally considered, presents the sequential development of the "forms" in which reason's own "true content" is expressed.

- (4) Each “stage” of this sequence is, in turn, an expression of the particular “form” assumed by reason within the *culture* from which its philosophical expression arises and of which it is a reflection (or expression).

The “strong version” of the thesis of the “end of history” follows directly from these points. It is, simply put, that Hegel’s notion of system, his interpretation of the history of philosophy, and his reading of “universal history” are related in such a way that each mutually implies the other; in other words, that the general thesis of the “end of history” necessarily includes the complete conceptual determination of the sphere of reason, the “completion” of the history of philosophy as a rational (conceptual) enterprise, and the “end” of “universal history” as a temporal sequence capable of “rational comprehension.” Any “weaker” view, which would deny one or more of the theses presented above, will not, by the argument offered here, correctly represent Hegel’s own position and will tend to destabilize the overall framework of his philosophical position.

The Scope of Hegel’s “Strong Thesis” about the “End of History”

Having argued for a “strong version” of Hegel’s thesis of the “end of history,” particularly in relation to his systematic response to Kantian “Reflexionsphilosophie,” I want now to consider, beginning again with its relation to Kant’s critical project, what conclusions we are warranted in drawing about its scope of application. In particular, I wish to suggest that underlying the hesitation in embracing such a version of the thesis on the part of more recent Hegel interpreters is a misunderstanding or, in some cases, deliberate revision of Hegel’s own systematic project. As an example of such a misreading, I would cite Frederick Beiser’s *The Fate of Reason*,¹³ in which he claims that, beginning with Schelling and Hegel, German philosophy reverted to the sort of “speculative metaphysics” that Kant’s Critical Philosophy had attempted to put aside once and for all. Suspicious of such “backsliding” on their own part, many more recent interpreters of Hegel have, it seems to me, chosen to “edit out” of Hegel ideas that might tend to confirm this, thus presenting a “more respectable, Kantianized Hegel.” In one sense, my reading agrees with them in holding (against a view like Beiser’s) that Hegel’s project remains, in important ways, limited and profoundly Kantian, but it proposes that the only viable way to make this point is to take Hegel, without emendation, as the completion of Kant’s own incomplete systematic project.

While there are a number of approaches that one might adopt, I will here briefly consider two points that, I believe, indicate the limits of the

scope of this thesis, even in its "strong version," in comparison with a very broad reading of it, such as that offered, for example, by Heidegger and some of his "poststructuralist" followers.¹⁴

Kant's "Post-Critical Metaphysics" and Hegel's Response

It is well known that Kant distinguishes, quite often, between (at least) two senses of "metaphysics." The first is that "rational" (though internally conflicted), "transcendent" philosophical project that his Critical Philosophy claims to have finally laid to rest, the demonstration being, primarily, the "Transcendental Dialectic" of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The second is a new sense of "metaphysics," based on the foundations provided by the Critical Philosophy, which he describes as

the system of pure reason, that is, the science which exhibits in systematic connection the whole body (true as well as illusory) of philosophical knowledge arising out of pure reason, and which is entitled *metaphysics*.¹⁵

Kant contrasts the "old" and "new" senses of metaphysics in a number of different ways, but the principal distinction, to which all the others eventually return, is that, while the former claims (spuriously) to present knowledge of the (alleged) "supersensible" grounds of experience (*noumena*), the latter restricts itself to elaborating the systematic order and interconnection of concepts and their further determinations that ground and can be "exhibited" within the limits of experience itself.

A key question in assessing Hegel's philosophical relation to Kant (and thus in understanding Hegel's project itself) turns upon whether Hegel ultimately reverts to the standpoint of the "old metaphysics" or remains true to the "Kantian revolution" of establishing a "new," limited sense of metaphysics. I want to suggest that a consideration of Hegel's two most mature, explicit, and extended general discussions of Kant's philosophy as a whole clearly indicates the latter.

First, in concluding his lengthy discussion of Kant's philosophical standpoint in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel, though critical throughout to be sure, notes three major contributions that it has made to the history of philosophy.¹⁶ First, he claims that in Kant's philosophy "we find on all hands the Idea of Thought, which is in itself the absolute Notion, and has in itself difference, reality." Second, he credits Kant with having introduced "the general idea of synthetic judgments a priori, a universal which has difference in itself," as lying at the heart of the philosophical enterprise. Third, he notes that "Kant's instinct" led him to carry out his project "with

the scheme of triplicity . . . in the whole system into which for him the entire universe was divided." He concludes that

Kant has thus made *an historical statement of the moments of the whole, and has correctly determined and distinguished them*: it is a good introduction to philosophy (my emphasis).

Second, in his Introduction to the so-called *Berlin Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel reiterates his own allegiance to Kant's basic philosophical standpoint. Frequently employing the Kantian phrase "the old metaphysic" to refer to that tradition that the Critical Philosophy has laid to rest, Hegel's detailed discussion of the "Transcendental Dialectic" adopts the following general view.¹⁷ On the one hand, Kant remained within the "subjective" standpoint dictated by his defective view of the relation between the understanding and reason and hence of the origin and significance of the categories; his "method" of critique was not as rigorous as that required by a genuinely systematic approach; and he failed, as well, to draw the correct conclusions about these matters from his critique of the "old metaphysic." On the other hand, and this notwithstanding, Kant's critique of the "old metaphysic" was right-headed and valid so far as it went, and it remained to later philosophy to remedy Kant's "subjective" notion of the categories, to elaborate them more fully, and to draw the proper "positive" conclusions from the "dialectical critique." Thus, even as Hegel claims that Kant mislocated the real source of the "limits" of Reason, it remains true that Hegel, as well, endorses a "philosophy of limits," at least in relation to "supersensible grounds" invoked by the "old metaphysic," which can no longer henceforth be invoked by the philosopher. Rather, we might say that the "bounds of Reason," as that self-contained conceptual sphere already anticipated by Kant, is "the actual" itself, which is ultimately history philosophically comprehended. Hegel's "metaphysic" is therefore none other than the project proposed by Kant, developed "objectively" and carried to its full conclusion.

This result already represents one important limitation of the thesis of the "end of history," for it invalidates any reading of this thesis that would attribute to Hegel some sort of "pre-Kantian metaphysical" foreclosure of any further possibility for experience or philosophical thought, a version of the thesis best known from Kojève's very influential reading of Hegel as a "historicized Parmenidean-Spinozist."¹⁸ I would also suggest that such a view finds its way into most "poststructuralist" readings of Hegel, which tend to favor Kant over Hegel, ignoring their important connections with one another.¹⁹

Reason and "Universal History"

In the work that has provided the context for most recent discussions of the "end of history" thesis, the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, as well as in those closely related lectures on the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explicitly formulates this thesis with respect to reason. In perhaps its classic statement, taken from the latter work²⁰ and reaffirmed and elaborated in the introduction to the "Berlin system,"²¹ Hegel is explicit in affirming that "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational." It is this insight that first makes "history" possible as a philosophical or "rational" discipline and thus comprehensible from the standpoint of Hegel's broader systematic project, and it is this on which a major part of Hegel's "strong version" of the thesis of the "end of history" is based.

Nonetheless, from the manner in which Hegel distinguishes among various types of history, this thesis also has a limited scope of application. The first form of history, which Hegel calls "original history," consists merely of disconnected narratives of events at which the historian was either present or heard about from those who were, and in this sense it is limited to the "historical present" of the historian. The second, which Hegel terms "reflective history," itself assumes various forms, that share in common the task of making relevant and general connections between past events and institutions and the historian's own later, though still historically limited, "present." Finally, "philosophical (or universal) history" is concerned with that which is "universal" or "rational" in history as directly engaged with the "universality" or "rationality" of philosophy itself. Again, note the terms in which Hegel presents this:

The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process. This conviction and intuition is a hypothesis in the domain of history as such. In that of Philosophy it is no hypothesis.²²

He goes on to argue both that this "hypothesis" becomes "actuality" only with Reason's own systematic completion (with the "end of the history of the Concept") and that the viewpoint with regard to history here announced signals the "end of history" in the sense that it can now be viewed, for the first time, as a "rational totality." Again, however, it is a limited thesis, in the sense that there is no implication whatever that either "original" or "critical" history be regarded as somehow at an end, either with respect to the actual ongoing processes with which they are concerned or as historiographical

disciplines. To restate my principal point, then, Hegel's thesis of the "end of history" must be understood as a claim dependent on and relevant to his view of reason and its systematic completion.

Reason, Spirit, and the "End of the History"

The most obvious objection to this reading of Hegel must now be directly confronted: If Hegel's thesis is limited, as I have claimed, to the sphere of Reason and its systematic completion, how are we to view the broader role of "Spirit" in the context of such an "end of history"? Here I will consider some relevant sections, especially the concluding one, of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, texts that present this issue quite explicitly.

In Hegel's long Introduction to the main topic, it is striking that he frames his project of a "history of philosophy" almost exclusively in terms of reason, thinking, and "the Idea" as their result, with the notion of "Spirit" appearing rather infrequently and somewhat derivatively. A great deal of the Introduction is devoted to clarifying either what does not fall under the purview of the history of philosophy as Hegel wishes to understand it (e.g., mythology, religion, political history) or similar projects or standpoints with which it should not be confused (which, as Hegel's discussion unfolds, bear unmistakable resemblances to the "original history" and "critical history" we have already discussed). Hegel's "principle of differentiation" on both counts, and thus the "model for philosophical historiography" that he sets before him, is stated very explicitly at the outset:

Now in reference to this Idea [of a History of Philosophy], I maintain that the sequence in the systems of Philosophy in History is similar to the sequence in the logical deduction of the Notion-determinations in the Idea. I maintain that if the fundamental conceptions of the systems appearing in the history of Philosophy be entirely divested of what regards their outward form, their relation to the particular and the like, the various stages in the determination in the Idea are found in their logical Notion. Conversely in the logical progression taken for itself, there is, so far as its principal elements are concerned, the progression of historical manifestations; but it is necessary to have these pure Notions in order to know what the historical form contains.²³

Clearly stated here is the idea that the development of reason's conceptual determinations lies at the basis of Hegel's history of philosophy, as is the direct connection between this and the thesis of the "end of history," sug-

gested by the fact that only when reason has completed its series of "pure Notions" is a genuinely scientific "history of philosophy" finally possible. Shortly hereafter, Hegel adds, further underlining these points:

It is shown from what has been said regarding the formal nature of the Idea, that only a history of Philosophy thus regarded as a system of development in Idea, is entitled to the name of Science: a collection of facts constitutes no science. Only thus as a succession of phenomena *established through reason, and having as content just what is reason and revealing it, does this history show that it is rational: it shows that the events recorded are in reason. How should the whole of what has taken place in reason not itself be rational?*²⁴ [my emphasis]

That reason lies at the heart of Hegel's project of a history of philosophy could not be more emphatically affirmed.

This affirmation of the centrality of reason and "the Idea" (the final determination of both of Hegel's major writings on logic) likewise commences the concluding section of his lectures.

The present standpoint of philosophy is that the Idea is known in its necessity; the sides of its diremption, Nature and Spirit, are each of them recognized as representing the totality of the Idea, and not only as being in themselves identical, but as producing this one identity from themselves; and in this way the identity is recognized as necessary. Nature, and the world or history of spirit, are the two realities; what exists as actual Nature is an image of divine Reason; the forms of self-conscious Reason are also the forms of Nature. The ultimate aim and business of philosophy is to reconcile thought or the Notion with reality.²⁵

Given the origins of Hegel's thesis of the "end of history" as the completion of Kant's systematic project, which I have already suggested, one is tempted to propose that this is a schematic statement of the exact form that Hegel's fulfillment of this project took: whereas Hegel's Logic completes the project begun with Kant's Critical Philosophy, so his Philosophies of Nature and Spirit complete Kant's "Metaphysic of Nature and Morals" (respectively). As the final *coup*, Hegel's view of Nature and Spirit as formed by the "diremption" of the (logical or rational) Idea into self-contained "totalities," each of which produces "this one identity from themselves" and "recognizes it as necessary," satisfies, quite literally, Kant's ultimate criterion for "system": "the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea."²⁶

But Hegel does not, in fact, conclude his lectures here. Rather, there shortly follows one of his most emphatic statements of the “end of history” thesis, this time framed in terms of Spirit:

In scientific knowledge alone [spirit] knows itself as absolute spirit; and this knowledge, or spirit, is its only true existence. This then is the standpoint of the present day, and the series of spiritual forms is with it for the present concluded.²⁷

Given what he has already said, this passage (and a couple of others in the same vein) raises two questions regarding the “end of history” thesis: first, what does the restatement in terms of spirit instead of reason imply about the thesis; and, second, what are we to make of the phrases “the present day” and “for the present”?

On the reading I would offer, Hegel’s position on the “end of history” and the “future of philosophy” amounts to this. The “end of history” is to be thought principally in connection with the final fulfillment of the task outlined by Kant in terms of his Critique of Reason and the “new metaphysic” following from it. This, together with its implications for a specific “rational” philosophical reading of “universal history” and the history of philosophy, constitutes the primary scope of this thesis. In this sense, philosophy as the construction of a “rational conceptual system,” its history read as the temporal process by which this construction has arisen, and historiography as a “rational,” philosophically driven project are thus all “ended” and, as Hegel writes, “a new epoch has arisen in the world.”²⁸ In this sense, philosophy can be regarded as having discharged its task with respect to its own underlying rational structure, the historical genesis of that structure, and the broader historiography of the process within which this developed.

But what, then, is the nature of this “new epoch [that] has arisen in the world”? Certainly Hegel clearly suggests, in this passage and elsewhere, that the dominant “concept” is now, in his own “present day” and “for us” as well, no longer reason but Spirit. But to appreciate the transition from reason to Spirit as defining the “future” of philosophy beyond the “end of history,” it is helpful to look back once again to the relation of Hegel’s own systematic project to that outlined by Kant. While Hegel, as I have argued, viewed Kant’s outline of a “system of Reason” as not only valid but completable, Hegel also realized that its “completion” would involve additional assumptions, bound up with a “stronger version” of the “end of history” than Kant himself foresaw. I want now to suggest that it is precisely these assumptions, involving the interconnections among systematic philosophy, its philosophical history, its broader context of “universal history,” and the cultural forms that constitute the “moments” of the latter, that

become gathered together under Hegel's notion of "Spirit." In other words, the notion of "Spirit," as such, is precisely what lay outside Kantian reason and its formation into the "system of the new metaphysic" and it could emerge as a new philosophical notion or "category" only when the completion of the "rational system" was in sight, appearing as the final assumption (or set of assumptions) necessary for the fulfillment of that project. Thus, whereas history up to Kant and Hegel's completion of his project had been the "history of reason or the Concept," the "new epoch" would be that of Spirit.

Perhaps Hegel himself points toward the sort of philosophical project that lies beyond "the present time" when he immediately proceeds, from the passage last quoted, to mention art, politics, and the investigation of nature as being "various modes of [Spirit's] reality, yet they are only modes." (I assume, on the basis of his earlier discussions, that he omits religion because of the close connection he sees between "revealed religion" and modern philosophy.) While Hegel's discussion here seems casual enough not to be regarded as excluding other possibilities, we might infer that, after the completion of the "system of reason" both in its "conceptual" and "historical" appearance, and after the philosophical consideration of "universal history" as the condition for this, the philosophical tasks remaining will no longer be those of rational system construction or the production of "metanarratives" of reason. Rather, in "the new epoch," with all the work that can be done under the aegis of reason in the areas of logic and history already accomplished, and secure in the knowledge that no further "objective domain" will present itself as alien to Spirit, philosophy must henceforth turn itself toward the ongoing task of mediating between the various cultural and historical forms that Spirit continues to produce through its own internal creative dynamic and the systematically completed sphere of reason that is now philosophy's permanent possession. (Notice that Hegel says, "This then is the standpoint of the present day, and the series of spiritual forms is with it *for the present* concluded," implying that Spirit will continue to assume new forms in the future though presumably reason will not).

To conclude, with yet one more glance back to Kant, it seems especially apt that Hegel would single out the spheres of nature, art, and politics as areas where philosophy, now as philosophical mediator and cultural critic, would intervene, since each represents a dimension of Kant's thought that Hegel regarded as inadequately developed in Kant's "new metaphysic." With regard to nature, for example, Hegel, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (v. III, 456), says of Kant's "metaphysic of nature,"

But this is on the one hand very scanty and restricted in content, containing as it does sundry general qualities and conceptions of

matter and motion, and with regard to the scientific side or the *a priori*, as Kant calls it, it is likewise altogether unsatisfactory.²⁹

He elaborates this critical attitude in the Introduction to the "Berlin Encyclopedia," where he flatly states that "the philosophy of Kant could have no influence on the method of the sciences"³⁰ suggesting instead that

speculative science . . . does not in the least neglect the empirical facts contained in the several sciences, but recognizes and adopts them: it appreciates and applies towards its own structure the universal element in these sciences, the laws and classifications: but besides all this, into the categories of science it introduces, and gives currency to, other categories.³¹

In other words, one of the tasks of philosophy beyond its "conceptual completion" would be that of integrating the ongoing development of the sciences and their more "regional concepts" into the broader logical structure already systematically developed—to show how, despite appearances, the evolving scientific theories and their empirical results "hang together" within the elaborated structure of human knowledge. Likewise, with regard to art, Hegel registers both the inadequacies of Kant's merely "formalistic" treatment of it in the *Critique of Judgment* and the broader point that art, because it is one realm of "absolute Spirit," a concept not yet available to Kant, never finds an adequate home in Kant's "new metaphysic."³² When Hegel himself assumes the role of "philosophical art critic" in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Fine Arts*, considering specific works of even contemporaneous art in their relationship to the "Spirit of the times," he is, perhaps, offering examples of the new philosophical task that lies ahead.³³ Finally, because, as I have already argued, Hegel clearly views political history and (at least) "critical historiography" as continuing beyond his own time, the philosopher will now be called on to track its particular developments and critically assess how they succeed or fail in providing conditions for Spirit's own self-expression. Again, this is an area dealt with by Kant in only very scanty and abstract terms.

Conclusion

If this reading of Hegel's thesis of the "end of history" is plausible, three major points follow with respect to current discussions of Hegel's significance for the history of philosophy.

- (1) In agreement with Hegel's earlier readers, his thesis is a strong one and cannot be excised from his thought, nor can it be reduced to some "weaker version" without threatening the integrity of Hegel's overall philosophical project.
- (2) Still, even in its "strong version," it remains within the ambit of Hegel's systematic completion of the Kantian notion of reason, and signals neither the "end" of philosophy as an enterprise firmly rooted in reason, nor the "end" of political history, either in the "nation-state" or in some theory of political action or social change.
- (3) In an important way, Hegel's thesis is diametrically opposed to the interpretation usually given it by "poststructuralists" who wish to reproduce "difference" at every point where "the appearance of unity threatens." Rather, the task of philosophy in the "post-Hegelian" (if not "postmodern") world remains that of mediating forms of difference that necessarily erupt within unity and seeing them as part of this unity. The real difference for philosophy in this "new epoch" is that philosophy is no longer called upon logically or systematically to "produce" a conceptual unity that had not previously existed, but rather to descend into the "diverse content of Spirit" as critic and mediator, armed with what it has already accomplished historically.

Notes

1. For more detailed discussions of some of the figures and their various approaches, which I only mention here in passing, see Rüdiger Bubner, "Hegel and the End of History," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 1991, 15–23. Also, various ways of interpreting Hegel's notion of the "end of history," although surveyed from perspectives differing from my own, are presented in the three essays grouped together in the section entitled "The Myth of the End of History" in Jon Stewart, ed., *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 18–236.

2. See preceding note.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (henceforth, *PH*), trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 63; G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976), 12, 86. All subsequent references to Hegel's texts will first cite the English translation used, followed by the corresponding volume and page number(s) of the Suhrkamp *Werkausgabe*.

4. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth *CPR*), trans. N. Kemp-Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 10; Axiii. Paralleling the manner of citing Hegel described above, all subsequent references to Kant will first cite the Kemp-Smith

translation, followed by the standard format for citing the corresponding page numbers in the *Akademie-Textausgabe*.

5. CPR, 10; Axiv.

6. CPR, 653; A832/B860.

7. CPR, 668–9; A856/B884 [my emphasis].

8. Cf. CPR, 608; A763/B791.

9. For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see the Introductory Essay included with my translation of the *Differenzschrift* in *Hegel: The Difference Between The Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy* (Reseda, CA: Ridgeview, 1978).

10. *Differenzschrift* (my translation cited above), 8; 2, 17.

11. *Ibid.*, 9; 2, 19.

12. *PH* 9; 12, 20

13. Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

14. More specifically, Heidegger, bolstered in part by Kojève and followed by such poststructuralists as Derrida, tended to read Hegel's philosophy in a "strong" but also very broad sense as "the end of the history of metaphysics" (or at least as "the beginning of the end," if one counts Nietzsche as the actual "end of the line"). Such a reading is possible only if one fails clearly to distinguish, as I think Hegel himself did, between the spheres of reason and Spirit. I argue here that while Hegel regarded himself as completing the "historical work of reason," he did not believe that the realm of Spirit was or could be so completed, at least by metaphysics or even philosophy generally.

15. CPR, 659; A841/B869.

16. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. II trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, (London: Routledge, 1968), 476 ff. (hereafter cited as *HP*); 20, 384 ff.

17. *Hegel's Logic, Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* (1830), (henceforth cited as *HL*), trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Section 46 ff.; 74 ff.; 8, 123 ff.

18. Cf. "A Note on Eternity, Time, and the Concept," in A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 100–149.

19. As examples, I would cite various discussions of Kant and Hegel scattered throughout the works of J. Derrida and J.-F. Lyotard that quite consistently cast Hegel as the "philosopher of *clôture*" opposite Kant as the "philosopher of limits."

20. *Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 20 ff.

21. *HL*, 8 ff.; 8, 47 ff.

22. *PH*, 9; 12, 20. Hegel's distinctions among the various "types" of historiography occur in the sections immediately preceding this remark.

23. *HP*, v. I, 30; 18, 49.

24. *HP*, v. I, 31; 18, 50.

25. *HP*, v. III, 545; 20, 454–55.

26. CPR, 653; A832/B860.

27. *HP*, v. III, 552; 20, 460–1.

28. *HP*, v. III, 551; 20, 460.

29. *HP*, v. III, 456; 20, 364.

30. *HL*, 92; 8, 144.

31. *HL*, 13; 8, 52.

32. Cf., e.g., *HP*, v. III, 471 ff.; 20, 379 ff.

33. Jere Surber, "Art as a Mode of Thought: Hegel's Aesthetics and the Origins of Modernism," in *Hegel and Aesthetics*, ed. William Maker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 45–59.

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Index



A

Academics (*see also* skepticism), 87, 89, 90, 93, 95, 100, 114, 116
 actuality, 29, 45, 53, 57, 61, 75–79, 82, 86, 108, 109, 128, 131, 137, 147, 168, 197, 215
 and system, 13, 24, 56, 78, 168–183, 215
 Wirklichkeit, 29, 173
 Ancients, the, 133
 Arcesilaus, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97, 102, 103
 Aristotle, 59, 64, 68, 120, 121, 122, 125, 139, 140, 150, 153, 162, 189, 198, 200, 203
ataraxia, 115, 119
 Athenians, 68, 69, 133
 atomism, 122, 155
 in Democritus, 124, 125
 in Leucippus, 124, 125
 in Rousseau, 11, 121–127
Aufhebung, 9, 34, 77, 81, 83, 105, 148, 156–158, 163

B

becoming, 1, 53, 64, 70, 71, 80, 109, 133, 147
 beginning, 7, 10, 12, 15, 19, 29, 36–46, 53, 69, 75, 76, 89, 90, 99, 100, 107–118, 127, 144, 149, 155, 161, 171, 198, 201, 206, 209, 212, 222
 Anfang, 31, 32, 170, 175
 beginning of history, 47
 beginning of the history of philosophy, 32, 33, 35
 beginning of philosophy, 29, 40, 109, 110, 111, 113
 beginning of world history, 43
 Behler, Ernst, 5, 15, 46
 Beiser, Frederick C., 4, 5, 15, 143, 158, 182, 212, 222
Bhagavad-Gita, 7, 41, 45, 48
Bildung, 67, 68
 Bubner, Rüdiger, 33, 139, 221

C

Carneades (*see also* skepticism), 90–97, 103
 circularity, 13, 116, 168, 180, 182–183
 Colebrooke, Henry Thomas, 36–42, 45, 47–48
 concept, 8, 13–15, 22–34, 40, 44, 52, 57, 61, 79, 85, 97, 108, 109, 111, 114, 121–141, 147–152, 157, 169, 171–182, 191, 196, 206, 218, 220
 Begriff, 19, 24, 34, 120, 131, 134, 140
 the Concept, 3, 71, 131–141, 161, 210–211, 215, 219, 222
 of infinity, 124, 140, 147, 148, 160
 and mediation, 26, 134
 and particularity, 134, 136, 171, 177, 178
 of personhood, 11, 122–124, 131–135, 140
 of reason, 151–152, 208
 of singularity, 125, 132, 134, 136, 167, 178
 speculative, 123, 126, 133, 148
 of truth, 178
 of will, 11, 121, 126
 consciousness (*see also* self-consciousness), 3, 4, 29, 32, 34, 40, 41, 51, 53, 54, 68, 69, 72, 77, 82, 89–101, 108–119, 123, 130, 133–134, 137–140, 147, 160, 163
 natural, 10, 110–113, 116–118
 ordinary, 95, 98, 100, 146, 172–173, 177, 180
 philosophical, 4, 118
contrat social (*see also* Rousseau), 124–129, 138, 139
 cycles, 13, 14, 194, 196, 199, 201, 204

D

Derrida, Jacques, 143–163, 222
 and eschatology, 12, 152, 157, 206
 and interpretation, 6, 9, 11, 154, 155

Derrida, Jacques (*continued*)

- and language
 - on signified, 152–156, 162
 - on signifier, 153–155
 - on speech, 153–156, 162
 - on writing, 152–157, 162
- logocentrism, 153, 163
- telos, 158, 188
- Descartes, René, 87–88, 104, 147, 187, 199, 201
- desire, 1, 8, 9, 52–64, 82, 129, 147, 174–175, 186
 - Trieb*, 9, 57, 178
- development, 2–15, 20–25, 29–33, 36–37, 44, 51–63, 79, 88, 94, 95, 101, 107–113, 119, 127, 130–131, 137, 150–151, 167–179, 187, 191, 196, 200, 209–211, 216–217, 220
 - historical, 7, 8, 11, 20, 37, 53, 59, 62, 110, 119, 169, 175
 - of philosophy, 61, 109, 169
 - progressive, 3, 178
 - stages of, 171
 - of thinking, 169, 179
- dialectic, 22, 23, 70, 73, 90, 93, 96–99, 132, 151, 189–196
 - dialectic progress, 189, 196
 - dialectical method, 6, 10, 87–90, 98–99, 102
 - dialectical moment, 99–101
 - dialectical process, 22, 132–133
 - dialectical skepticism, 91–92
 - negative dialectic, 70, 118
- Dilthey, Wilhelm, 188, 193, 197, 206
- Düsing, K., 185

E

- Eleatism* (*see also* Greeks, the), 198
- Encyclopedia, 3–5, 12, 15, 43, 99, 113, 144, 159, 186, 214, 220
- Entwicklung*, 23, 25, 29–31, 34, 138, 182, 202–203
- epoché* (*see also* skepticism), 90–95, 102, 112, 115, 120
- Eurocentrism, 46, 52, 56, 58

F

- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 72, 75, 84, 144, 158, 182, 190, 196, 206, 209, 210, 222
- Forster, Michael, 88–90, 99–100, 102–104, 159, 182
- freedom, 3, 9, 11, 12, 32, 37, 51–63, 68–70, 74, 77–84, 110, 121–131, 136–140, 143–144, 149, 159, 174, 209
 - civil, 126, 129
 - and conscience, 69, 86
 - and irony, 68, 70, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80–82, 84
 - and Kierkegaard, 68, 74, 77, 82, 84
 - and morality, 68, 69, 77, 79, 80, 81, 84
 - natural, 123, 126, 127
 - negative, 70
 - political, 8, 33, 51–55, 61, 63, 120, 144, 161
 - and Socrates, 68, 70, 74, 77, 79–82, 84, 130
 - subjective, 9, 68–69, 77, 80, 130

G

- Gegenwart*, 23–26, 203
- Geist*, 29, 124, 126
- God (*see also* pantheism), 4, 41, 137, 144–151, 154, 159–163, 174, 182
 - Heidegger on, 63, 120, 144, 153, 159, 161–162, 190, 201, 206, 213, 222
 - Kant on, 12, 151, 161, 182
 - Spinoza on, 12, 144–151, 154, 159–163, 199
- Greeks, the, 8, 9, 35, 51, 52, 54–62, 137

H

- Harris, H. S., 101, 102, 104, 105, 119, 140, 144, 159
- Hartmann, Nicolai, 189, 190
- Heidegger, Martin, 63, 120, 144, 153, 159, 161, 162, 190, 201, 206, 213, 222
- history, 55, 60, 67, 89, 110, 123–126, 137, 157, 171, 191, 192
 - approaches to
 - cyclical, 189, 194, 196
 - helicoid, 13, 14, 194, 196, 197
 - linear, 13, 14, 20, 27, 189, 190, 195, 197, 200
 - typological, 189, 193
 - end of history, 14, 15, 53, 56, 158, 205–221
 - historicity, 3, 4, 10, 13, 20, 22, 24, 36, 64, 107, 119, 167, 172
 - of metaphysics, 209, 222
 - of philosophy, 1–14, 19–34, 35–47, 51–63, 107–109, 121, 131, 167–183, 185–202, 206, 210–220
 - philosophy of history, 5, 6, 37, 43, 44, 196
 - types of history, 215
 - universal history, 15, 209, 212, 218, 219
 - world history, 15, 20, 28, 30, 33, 37, 43

I

- Idea, the, 4, 71, 77, 80, 146, 179, 203, 207, 213, 216, 217
- idealism, 72, 88, 98, 99, 101, 102, 117, 118, 125, 140, 158, 182, 195–204
 - absolute, 146
 - objective, 197–201
 - subjective, 72, 99, 146, 197
- identity, 11, 20, 24, 26, 29, 46, 109, 118, 124, 132, 134, 146, 149, 177, 217
 - dialectical, 122
 - self-identity, 122, 131, 134, 135
 - speculative, 122, 123, 135
- Indian philosophy (*see also* Oriental philosophy), 7, 35–48, 58
- Infinite, the, 4, 11, 54, 71, 75, 81, 82, 116–118, 137, 147, 148, 153–156, 160, 163, 167, 208, 209
- irony, 15, 156
 - Aufhebung* of, 77, 81, 83, 156
 - constructive, 9, 70–71, 81–82
 - destructive, 70, 76, 79–80
 - and freedom, 68, 70, 74, 77–84
 - and Kierkegaard, 9, 67–71, 74–77, 82–86
 - and Schlegel, 9, 68, 71–75, 80, 83–86
 - Socratic, 9, 67–71, 74–82

- J**
- Jaeschke, Walter, 20, 26, 33, 38, 39, 42, 46, 159, 181
- Jones, Sir William, 36, 38, 47
- justification, 13, 84, 88, 96, 124, 126, 168–172, 175, 179, 183, 204
- K**
- Kant, Emmanuel, 45, 151, 152, 171, 199, 200, 207, 208, 211
- and critical philosophy, 14, 22, 33, 202, 212, 213, 220
- critique of reason, 161, 209–210, 214
- and Fichte, 158, 182, 190, 206, 209, 210, 222
- and Hegel, 12, 14–15, 19, 22–33, 45, 79, 88, 101–102, 146, 151, 152, 158, 161, 171, 182, 190, 199–200, 202, 206–223
- and metaphysics, 10, 14, 158, 199–200, 209, 212–213, 222
- system of reason, 12, 169, 209, 219
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 9, 67–71, 74–77, 82–86
- Kojève, Alexandre, 206, 214, 222
- L**
- Lauer, Quentin, 5, 15
- Logic, 3–15, 20, 26–34, 53, 57, 64, 99–105, 110, 113, 119–120, 123–127, 131–140, 144, 159, 186, 207, 217, 222
- Objective Logic, 131, 139
- Subjective Logic, 131, 140
- M**
- Marx, Karl, 52, 139, 140, 141, 199, 205
- metaphysics, 10, 14, 24, 25, 117, 148, 153–158, 197–200, 209, 212–213, 222
- method, 1, 7, 9, 14, 19–21, 27–28, 31–33, 91–94, 113, 149, 170, 214, 220
- dialectical, 6, 10, 87–90, 98, 99, 102
- of equipollence, 88–90, 96–102
- skeptical, 89, 91
- N**
- necessity, 7, 9, 19, 21, 27, 31, 32, 55–61, 71, 101, 109, 113, 118, 122, 131, 152, 157, 171, 176–180, 190, 191, 197, 207, 217
- negation, 10, 11, 39, 72, 75, 76, 80, 81, 101, 108, 112, 117, 118, 127, 133, 134, 140, 147, 148
- negativity, 72, 75, 79–80, 85, 108, 117, 132–134, 140, 149, 178, 196, 198
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 143, 150, 156, 158, 163, 222
- P**
- Pantheism (*see also* Spinoza), 36, 143–146, 158, 160
- parallelism, 7, 26–32
- philosophy, 1–6,
- beginning of, 35–49, 53, 144
- Greek, 51–52, 54–62, 87–105, 114–117
- of history (*see also under* history), 5, 6, 37, 43, 44, 196
- Kantian, 14, 61, 144, 146, 150, 152, 157, 162, 194, 205, 207, 209, 212–214, 219, 221
- Oriental, 42–44
- and substance, 11, 40, 62, 73, 130, 136, 147–150, 153, 154, 160, 177, 191, 199
- philosophy of, 185–204
- Philosophy of Right*, 11, 15, 24, 34, 57, 64, 85, 86, 123, 133, 136, 137, 140, 144, 159, 186, 215, 222
- political philosophy, 11, 121, 126
- and system, 3–7, 12–13, 19–34, 167–183
- Plato, 9, 11, 67, 68, 80, 81, 102, 121–124, 129, 130, 150, 153, 158, 195–198, 200, 203
- presence, 25, 26, 74, 148, 153–158
- progress, 2, 14, 30, 44, 53, 54, 55, 62, 93, 108, 117, 186, 192–201, 209
- in history, 188
- linear, 189, 190, 200
- in philosophy, 13
- proof, 31
- experiential, 13, 168, 172–176, 179, 180, 183
- speculative, 13, 168, 171, 172, 176, 179, 180
- Pyrrhonists (*see also* skepticism), 87, 89, 90–97, 100, 104
- R**
- reality (*see also Wirklichkeit*), 19, 20, 24, 28–30, 57, 68, 70, 91, 140, 145–147, 162, 186, 191, 196, 197, 204, 213, 217, 219
- reason, 4, 19–22, 27, 29, 31, 37, 43, 57, 59, 61, 79, 80, 89, 96, 99, 108, 117, 119, 122, 125, 128, 131, 132, 135, 139, 146, 152, 153, 156, 157, 160, 163, 167–176, 179, 180, 182, 183, 188, 197–199, 204, 208–222
- pure reason, 36, 151, 213
- speculative, 99, 100, 211
- sphere of reason, 14, 212, 219
- reflexivity, 186
- relativism, 21, 22, 24, 55, 192, 193
- Rockmore, Tom, 162, 182, 183
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 11, 121, 123–131, 133, 135, 137–139, 141, 153
- S**
- Schlegel, Friedrich, 7, 9, 35–39, 41, 45, 46, 68, 71–75, 80, 83–86, 143
- and Oriental philosophy, 42–44
- and Socrates, 68, 70–86, 130, 198, 199
- Schulze, G. E., 104, 111
- science, 5, 31, 32, 39, 61, 101, 110, 112, 113, 115, 117, 154, 156, 158, 161, 168–173, 179, 189, 195, 197, 200–202, 213, 217, 220
- genuine science, 167, 170, 173, 175
- of reason, 171
- philosophical, 12–14, 87, 89, 168, 169, 171–174, 177, 180
- system of, 168, 180
- Wissenschaft*, 21, 34, 120, 138, 140, 170, 191

- self-consciousness (*see also* consciousness),
12, 25, 28, 29, 32, 51–57, 63, 64, 76,
80, 99, 110, 130, 133–137, 146, 149,
158
- Sextus Empiricus, 10, 88, 91, 93, 102, 103,
107, 112, 114, 116, 120
- skepticism, 10, 11, 13, 21, 22, 24, 70, 73,
87–105, 107–120, 171, 175–177, 180,
182, 187–192, 195, 197, 198, 199
affirmative, 74, 75, 79, 113, 117, 148, 207
ancient, 2, 10, 55, 59, 68, 69, 75, 87–
91, 97–102, 107, 109, 111, 112,
114, 116–120, 129, 130, 133, 137,
161, 182, 194, 197–199
dogmatic, 114, 116
incomplete, 10, 22, 87, 111–113, 117,
155, 212
negative, 10, 13, 70, 74, 94, 108, 111–
114, 117, 118, 197, 198
Pyrrhonian, 10, 88, 89, 93, 94, 97, 98,
102, 104, 112, 117
and sense-certainty, 95, 112, 114, 116,
118, 134, 135
thoroughgoing, 10, 107, 111, 112, 113,
117, 118
tropes of, 10, 89, 93, 95, 97, 99, 103,
104, 112, 116–118, 120
- Socrates, 68–86, 130, 198, 199
and freedom, 69, 81, 82, 84
and irony, 9, 67–86
and morality, 68, 69, 75–86, 145, 199
and wisdom, 1, 2, 9
- Spinoza, 143–163, 199
acosmism, 146, 159
and *causa sui*, 144, 145, 148, 150, 160
and Derrida, 11, 12, 143, 145, 147,
149, 151–163, 222
and Hegel, 11, 12, 143–163
and holism, 11, 12, 150, 151, 161, 162
and Nietzsche, 143, 150, 156, 158, 163
and substance, 11, 147–150, 153, 154,
160, 177, 191, 199
and totality, 12, 147, 150–152, 155–
160, 171, 175, 176, 205, 215, 217
- Spirit, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 20–32, 37, 41,
43, 44, 51–63, 69, 78, 108, 110, 112,
124–129, 141, 149, 160, 174, 191, 197,
199, 211
absolute spirit, 6, 7, 20, 24, 25, 28, 30,
191, 218
and nature, 217
objective spirit, 20, 24, 25, 30, 129
phenomenology of, 3, 6, 10, 15, 25,
34, 64, 78, 86–88, 100, 105, 107,
111–114, 118, 120, 133–135, 139,
144, 149, 150, 159–161, 209
subjective spirit, 197
- state, the, 36, 57, 85, 112, 120, 122, 123,
125, 126, 130, 192
nation-state, 221
- synchronicity, 7, 20, 25, 28–32
- system, 10, 62, 78, 100, 111, 118, 145, 149
and history, 2–6, 19–34, 62, 145, 167–
183, 185–193, 199, 206–219
and reason, 3, 4, 12–15, 19–22, 27, 36,
100, 151, 167–183, 188, 197–199,
204, 208–222
systematicity, 13, 14, 167, 172, 180,
190, 198
and totality, 12, 20, 25–27, 56, 151,
176, 215, 217
- T**
- Thales, 45, 54, 55, 56, 158
- thinking, 1, 4, 5, 10, 12, 20–24, 29–33, 42–
45, 52, 54–62, 91–101, 110, 124–126,
130–137, 140, 149, 152, 155, 169–174,
179, 190, 196, 208, 216
critical, 2
philosophical, 20–24, 29, 32
- time, 2, 4, 23–27, 30, 32, 52–54, 57, 64,
109–118, 168, 178, 179, 180, 186, 187,
190, 192, 193, 195, 197, 199, 200, 204,
211, 218, 219, 220
and externality, 108, 169
historical, 210
the order of, 168, 179
spirit of the, 52, 211
- truth, 1–3, 8, 9, 13, 14, 21–28, 37, 54, 57,
58, 62, 63, 67–78, 81, 82, 86, 91–95,
108, 111, 114–117, 141, 144, 149–151,
154, 156, 161, 163, 168–170, 173, 176–
179, 186, 188, 189, 193, 195, 197, 201
conception of, 151, 168, 177
concreteness of, 177, 178
and falsity, 177, 178, 179
and philosophy, 24
das Wahre, 150, 151
Wahrheit, 150, 181, 202
- V**
- volonte generale* (*see also* under will), 121,
123, 125, 126, 128, 138
- volonte de tous* (*see also* under will), 125,
128, 129
- W**
- will, the, 71, 129, 136, 137, 141, 143, 161
concept of, 11, 121, 126
free, 79, 126–130, 136, 140
general will, 125, 128, 135, 139
individual, 125, 128
and personhood, 11, 122–124, 131–
135, 140
universal, 124, 125, 128, 130, 135
will of all, 135
- Williams, Michael, 88, 101, 102, 104
- Williams, Robert, 9, 88, 102, 105
- Wirklichkeit* (*see also* actuality), 29, 173
- wisdom, 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 36, 38, 48
- Wissen, 180
- Wissenschaft (*see also* under science), 21, 34,
120, 138, 140, 170, 191
- Weltgeschichte* (*see also* under history; world
history), 20, 25, 28, 30, 32, 47
- Y**
- Yoga-sutras, 39, 40, 42, 45